Well-Being Performance in Botswana: Centering Women's Roles in Popular Theatre

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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December 2013

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest and most special thanks go to my co-advisors, Dr. Sonja Kuftinec and Dr. Cindy Garcia, for your vigorous academic guidance, which you provided with patience and warmth. Most importantly, I thank you for your support in my personal challenges during this journey. To my committee members, Dr. Margaret Werry, Dr. Amy Kaminsky and Dr. Megan Lewis, thank you so much for the sacrifices you made to be involved in my work. Special thanks to Megan Lewis for your continuous guidance, support, encouragement and love.

I would like to thank the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICGC) for the research fellowship, and for giving me a second home; for this I will forever be grateful. To the University of Botswana and University of Minnesota's Theatre Arts and Dance, thank you for your financial support throughout my study. I give special thanks to Mrs. Mokane for your motherly support. To Ginni Arons: thanks for your consistent prompt assistance! Thank you for your support Kay Martinovich and Stephanie Lein Walseth!

To the people without whom this research would not have been possible—my research participants and co-producers—I give my utmost appreciation. To YOHO theatre group and its executive director, Vuyisile Otukile, thank you for letting me into your space and for openly and patiently sharing your work with me. Most importantly, thank you for the most cherished subsequent friendships. To Moremogolo Extension Theatre Trust, I sincerely thank you for sharing your work. Special thanks go to Mpho Rabotsima, Bathusi Lesolobe and Orometswe Maotwanyane. What could I have done without you three? I will forever be indebted to you for your consistent assistance, and I

look forward to working with you again. Lastly, I would like to thank Moabi Mogorosi and Mrs. Kenole Mogorosi. Mma Mogorosi, thank you so much for letting me into your private space—your home—and for feeding, entertaining and educating me.

To my mentor and brother, Dr. Praise Zenenga, I give special thanks for literally holding my hand throughout this journey. You have been my greatest source of support and encouragement since 2007 when I first met you. You believed in me even in moments when I didn't believe in myself. For this, I will always be grateful. As I promised, I give you the "P" and will keep the "hd."

To my guardian angels: my deceased parents. To my father, Michael Tshotlego Mmila, you not only fathered me; you also planted the seed of community mobilization and organization, and the importance of giving even when you don't have much to give. Thank you for inspiring this research. To my mother, Matshidiso Dorcus Mmila, you have shown me resilience, love, humility and compassion. I continue to strive to make you both proud! I love you and miss you terribly.

I want to thank my family—my husband Dr. Phemelo Tshane and daughters, Tiiso and Tumo Tshane—for their enormous love and support. Tiiso, thank you for switching roles with me in trying times, you are just amazing.

To my loving friend and studying buddy, June Msechu, thank you for reigniting my passion for my work, for believing in me, for supporting my work and for the technical help. You have a heart of gold rafiki! We are in this together. To my deceased friend and cohort, Dr. Ivone Barriga, I will forever be grateful for your friendship. I miss you sorely my friend, my Barrrrrrrrrrrrriga! This is to us!

DEDICATION

To my daughters, Tiiso and Tumo Tshane: "*Mmamotse o bonwa mantlwaneng*!"

In loving memory of my deceased parents, Matshidiso Mmila and Tshotlego Mmila: *Lo e jwetse peo…*

ABSTRACT

Through choreographic ethnography, archival research and performance analysis, my study seeks to examine the role of rural women as cultural producers in areas of popular theatre and storytelling in post-colonial Botswana. I investigate how popular theater operates as a tool for both top-down communications about state-identified concerns as well as community mobilization for marginalized members of society such as women in rural areas.

I critically examine the Vision 2016 Program, which informs some of the Botswana government's aspirations, including the protection of women, health issues and funding theatre. The government often funds popular theatre companies to communicate the Vision. I therefore use the Vision to highlight connections and contradictions between policies on the proclaimed community development and the actual practice on the ground. The question I ask is: who benefits from these collaborations; the government, the theatre companies or the communities themselves?

I argue that since the 1970s, the use of popular theatre has gained popularity in Botswana and Africa in general. Grounded in Freire and Boal's theorizations and traditional African (and Tswana) performance practices, African theatre scholars and practitioners have hailed popular theatre as a response to a history that has undermined people's genuine participation in development processes. Yet I claim that in some instances communities are not in control of this medium as their concerns are lost within homogenizing national discourses of state-funded popular theatre intervention projects. Through participant observations on and off stage, emphasizing attunement to social interactions of three companies - Youth Health Organization (YOHO) headquarters

theatre group, Mama Theatre group and Moremogolo Extension Theatre Trust - I maintain that by turning oppressed communities into passive objects of superficial, one-dimensional messages infused with colonial and patriarchal formations, some Batswana theatre practitioners undermine the very goals of popular theatre. The study points to alternative sites within and outside the confines of popular theatre where subversive discourses of oppressed communities (groups and individuals) are located. As the first study to locate the role of women in popular theatre, the dissertation contests dominant narratives and questions how women in rural areas still manage to tactically engage in issues of importance to them.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACHAP	African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ARV	Antiretroviral Therapy
BAOTA	Botswana Association of Theatre Activists
BAIA	Botswana Alcohol Industry Association
BCC	Botswana Council for Churches
BCP	Botswana Congress Party
BDP	Botswana Democratic Party
BMD	Botswana Movement for Democracy
BNF	Botswana National Front
BPP	Botswana People's Party
BTR	Bosele Tshwaragang Report
CEDA	Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency
CKGR	Central Kalahari Game Reserve
DAC	Department of Arts and Culture
GAC	Grant Assessment Committee
GBV	Gender Based Violence
FPK	The First People of The Kalahari
FRAC	Financial Request Assessment Committee
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IPH	Intimate Partner Homicides
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
LEA	Local Enterprise Authority
MOH	Ministry of Health
NDB	National Development Bank

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
NPI	New Partners Initiative
RADP	Rural Area Development Programme
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease(s)
STS	Silencing the Self
TB	Tuberculosis
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
YOHO	Youth Health Organisation
WAD	Women's Affairs Department
WIMSA	Working Group of Indigeneous Minorities of Southern Africa

INTRODUCTION

> *Popular theatre is a two-way communication process; it serves as a catalyst for involving people in discussion and action on their problems rather than merely accepting their lot or waiting for external solutions. (Byram 10)*
>
> *Popular theatre is a term that describes a process of non-formal education. This seems a good point to emphasize the great importance that the Government attaches to non-formal education [which] becomes the key channel of communication between the Government and the majority of the people. (You will note that I use the term in a tow-way sense – the education of the people by the Government, and also education of Government by the people. (Hon. Morake 51)*

As a two-way communication process, popular theatre has the potential to create a space for bottom-up communication. As one Motswana theatre practitioner, Bathusi Lesolobe, enthusiastically attests, this democratic communication is the quality that sets it apart from other mass communication mediums such as written documents and boring government speeches that are alienated from their targeted audiences. Hence theatre groups, government departments, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), multi-sectoral AIDS committees among others, are attracted to this potential of popular theatre to function as a catalyst for community organization, communication, education and awareness on various social issues. The history of theatre in Botswana (and Africa in general) can be traced to the *Laedza Batanani* project of 1974. Addressing participants at the launch of the national popular theatre workshop in Molepolole village in 1978, the then Minister of Education's (Hon. Morake) speech (above) marks not only the initial development of popular theatre in Botswana, but also government's attraction to it. Therefore since the 1970s, many theatre practitioners have extensively used popular theatre to engage rural communities in addressing social maladies that trouble them and the nation at large.

In Botswana, popular theatre is part of the national program, *Vision 2016*. This program was formulated by the government, supposedly with the input of a wide spectrum of individuals and institutions to reflect Batswana's dreams and aspirations for their long-term future. The goals of the Vision, which relate to the performances analyzed in this study, are: "eradicating absolute poverty"; "greater tolerance and acceptance of differences between people - their religion, language, ethnic background"; "no new HIV infections by 2016"; and "eliminating serious and violence crime" ("Long Term Vision for Botswana"). As the observed performances reveal, the Botswana government often collaborates with some theatre groups in order to raise awareness about these issues. It is important to note that these state-artist collaborations are guided by relevant goals of the Vision. However, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, and the growing gap between the rich and the poor, indicate that the popular theatre interventions do not always yield social and behavioral change. While I acknowledge the difficulty of quantifying the impact of popular theatre or any type of community theatre, on health outcomes and behavior change, I argue that part of the problem lies with interventionists' failure to meaningfully involve communities in decision-making processes regarding their concerns. In particular, in government funded projects, the focus seems to be on pushing the agenda of the Vision which do not always reconcile with communities' priorities and or perspectives.

In fact, I further claim that this observed lack of meaningful community participation also applies to the very formulation of the guiding Vision. Its website defines Vision 2016 as "Botswana's strategy to propel its socio-economic and political development into a competitive, winning and prosperous nation. Seven key goals have

been developed to achieve this" ("Vision2016"). Although the website claims that the program was formulated in consultation with Batswana, I find this claim questionable based on the fact that none of the research participants in this study has not been nor knows anyone who has partaken in the formulation of the Vision. The question that I ask, but do not directly answer in this dissertation is: Which Batswana did the government involve? How then are Batswana expected to participate in the implementation of something they have very little knowledge of and care for? This seemingly lack of local community's involvement has created a lot of rejections and ambivalences towards the Vision as evidenced by a female chief communication and public relation officer at a parastatal organization, Kelebemang Mogotsi's quick retort, "I don't believe in the whole thing [Vision 2016] to start with. It's just a theory that was never well formulated...it will not help Batswana in any way" (E-mail interview).[1] These sentiments are echoed by many other Batswana across classes, geographical locations and genders such as one unemployed male resident of Molapowabojang village, Micah Letshabo's dismissal of the Vision, "Who knows what its custodians are? For as long as Botswana's vision remains a prescription of the West, poverty and other problems will always prevail" (Informal interview). Such responses beg for this critical question: Who then does the Vision serve? Perhaps the answer lies in this statement further made by the Vision 2016 website "At the onset of the 21st century, Botswana found itself caught up in a historical period of change. In order to cope with challenges of globalization and neo-liberalism, the state formulated its dreams and aspirations through The Vision 2016 Program as a way of adapting to and imagining this process of change" ("Vision2016"). It is therefore

[1] This was in response to my questions; "What are your views on Vision 2016? Do you believe it is a representation of Batswana's aspirations?"

tempting to argue that while the Vision might have good intentions and some relevance to the situation in Botswana, it was clearly formulated on the ideologies of western neo-liberalism which often fail to take into account unique specific contexts and their demands. As a neo-liberal system –based mechanism, the Vision tends to be guided by economic and modernizing definitions of "prosperity" and "development" (the basis of the Vision as mentioned above). These definitions and perspectives, do not always reconcile with those of local communities, oftentimes resulting in conflict as I demonstrate in Chapter Four. Hence the Vision advocates' claims of Batswana's participation in the formulation of the Vision calls into question understandings of the notion of "participation" by all actors: state and communities. Consequently, if the Vision is the guiding tool for state/theatre collaborations, what are the understandings of "participation" – a defining element of popular theatre – by the state, theatre practitioners and communities? How do these in turn influence community participation in popular theatre interventions?

This study seeks to examine how different popular theatre groups independently and/or in partnership with the state use popular theatre to increase community participation towards enhancing the well-being of oppressed communities in post-colonial Botswana. Although the statement made by Hon. Morake in 1978 emphasizes democratic communication between those in power and the oppressed, I argue that today, in 2013, this claim for equal communication is yet to be achieved in Botswana. My overarching claim is that although it was theoretically intended to give a voice to those oppressed by issues of health, gender inequalities, ethnic marginalization and poverty (among others), popular theatre in Botswana essentially operates as a tool for top-down

communications about state-identified concerns and perceptions of these issues. There is evidence of minimal community participation and dialogue (by which many of theatre groups nevertheless define their work) in the play-making process; hence, the "on-stage" performances to a large extent perpetuate uncontested dominant narratives and discourses. I argue that this is mainly because men and the state (through funding) control theatre. In fact, funding, or a lack thereof, plays a fundamental role in the limited involvement of communities in the theatrical representations of 'their' issues.

Furthermore, I argue that another contributing factor to the one-dimensional hegemonic representations is the tendency of popular theatre practitioners to focus on the meaning created in the final on-stage performances. Without denying the importance of the final product, in my view the public on-stage performance is a limited and oftentimes hegemonic narrative. It is a narrative that is to a large extent influenced by the power relations between the theatre group, the state (funder), and the community. For this reason, I propose a (renewed) focus on what I call performances of the "off-stage" (verbal and embodied gestures that occur in rehearsals, casual one-on-one discussions, and observations that I made outside the theatrical on-stage performances) as a space where discourses of the subordinate are partially located. There is power enunciated in both the "on-stage" and "off-stage" performances. Hence, I proffer that it is meaningful for popular theatre interventionists to consider both the off-stage and the on-stage space discourses, whether they are in concert with or contradict one another. Perhaps the contradictions can evolve into a workable symbiosis for all involved: the subordinate and those in power.

Popular Theatre

Popular theatre is a context-based term that, in Botswana, as in many other African countries, is usually referred to by many names, as observed by African theatre scholars (see Mogobe, Kamlongera, Jacques, Mda, Kidd, Morake, Kerr and Mlama). These labels include community theatre/drama, theatre for social mobilization, theatre for development and social drama. There are inevitable connotations associated with each label, and each label is to a large extent influenced by the interest of the theatre group. These interests range from "a technocratic, message-oriented 'domestication theatre' at one end of the spectrum to a process of consciousness-raising, organization-building and struggle at the other hand" (Kidd 265).

For the purpose of this study I use Penina Mlama's definition of popular theatre: "a process of theatre creation emerging from the community's active involvement in identifying problems, analyzing and communicating them through theatre with the view to solving them" (46). Similar to Morake's definition, Mlama's emphasizes community participation and ownership of represented problems: community-identified problems serve as the raw material of the performance. This participatory communication is derived from Paulo Freire's (20st century Brazilian educator) belief that communities, no matter how marginalized or oppressed, had the potential to analyze the problems associated with issues themselves, and to find suitable solutions for them. In other words, innovative ideas did not have to come from outside, but could be generated by people in local communities engaged in dialogue with each other. If any external facilitator was

involved in the communication, his/her job was to think *with* rather than *for* the community (Kerr 11). Ideally, the aim is to produce a theatre *with*, *for* and *by* the people.

I have observed that in Botswana, most theatre groups identify as "popular theatre," "grass-root community communication theatre," or "theatre for development." Some even use the labels interchangeably. Regardless of which label they adopt, all of the theatre groups studied here cite "community participation" as an objective. Hence, in this study, though I choose to use the term "popular theatre," I occasionally use "community theatre" to refer to the same practice.

Well-Being

The dissertation takes a social psychological broad view of well-being as socially constituted. This stance is captured by Australian scholars Mulligan et, al who define well-being as:

> Connected with physical and mental health, income, wealth and with life satisfaction, but is also much related to our sense of social connectedness, inclusion and participation, existential security and safety, political citizenship, self-development and actualization, and opportunities for education, recreation and creative expression (22).

This view recognizes the importance of an individual's overall satisfaction with life (economic, physical and mental good health). Most importantly, it situates the individual's well-being in the community, society and world: his/her meaningful relationship with those he/she is in co-existence with. That is, as Mulligan et al. further note, "our wellbeing is situated in the world even as it is felt and expressed through our bodies" (25). This aspect of the notion of well-being resonates with Martin Seligman's

theory (quoted by a scholar of philosophy, Valerie Tiberius)[2] of subjective well-being as a result of a combination of factors. According to Seligman, these include an individual's personality, life circumstances and cultural variables such as wealth and norms which often times dictate our feelings and guide our choices (Tiberius, public lecture). As such, an individual's personal histories, life circumstances, social and communal life-world are essentially constitutive of our well-being (Mulligan et al. 25). Important to this dissertation is the connectedness of individual and communal standards of well-being. For instance how do existing socio-cultural and economic structures in Botswana enhance individual and community well-being? How does popular theatre as community-based theatre facilitate a sense of well-being? As a form of projected community (of oppressed communities), to what extent does popular theatre in Botswana enhance individual/communal creativity and freedom from constraining socio-cultural, economic and political structures – enhancing communities' quality of life? The dissertation thus connects analyses of popular performances of different social themes experienced by specific communities in specific locations to broader social structures.

Community

My study adopts an all encompassing sense of 'community' to refer to groups of people in specific geographical locations that may or may not have shared norms, values, culture and interests. For instance in rural areas such as in Kanye West where one of the storyteller resides, there is more groups of people who have stronger ethnic and cultural bonds. In other settings such as in Jwaneng mining town, although communities may not necessarily have common cultural or ethnic ties – as a mobile community – they may be

[2] In a public lecturer, Tiberius made reference to: Seligman, Martin. *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. New York: Free Press, 2011.

united by mining related challenges such as high HIV/AIDS infections facilitated by migration mobility. The study in particular, is attentive to multi-memberships even within the same community. For instance, within larger communities bound by geographical location (mining, rural, urban), there may be those that are brought even closer together by disparities of gender, age, class and ethnicity within the larger communities. That is, there are always chances of simultaneous matches, mismatches and tensions as the subset communities seek freedom and protection from the larger communities. Hence the dissertation advocates the need for any external interventions – such as popular theatre practitioners - to consider these differences within communities, and how they influence community participation as a central element of popular theatre.

Additionally, in this study, I regard popular theatre participants (performers and audiences) as a community of disadvantaged and oppressed groups who have come together to raise their concerns. In these ephemeral performances, the basis of consociation is to address and challenge common oppressions. Even though the purpose of alliances here resemblances what Mulligan et al. term a "projected community" which can take the form of "ongoing associations of people who seek politically expressed integration, associative communities which seek to enhance and support individual creativity, autonomy and freedom from hierarchically imposed constraints…," (22) these alliances can stem out of symbolic associations as well as actual social substance.

Although they may or may not have cultural bonds or adhere to the same values, it is important to note that these participants of popular theatre – a theatre geared towards social change – have made conscious choices to participate (through face to face,

embodied and verbal interactions) to perform their imagined change – enhancing individual and community well-being.

Audiences

In all the theatrical performances observed, the audience was mostly made up of young men and women roughly aged between ten and thirty-six. According to the theatre practitioners interviewed here, while the focus is generally on youth, specific themes were targeted for specific members within the youth community for instance YOHO's "Don't Do That" and Moremogolo's "Alcohol " plays were primarily targeted for youth who drink irresponsibly while YOHO's "The Flower's" focus was on young men in relationships . However, the performances are open to all interested community members. Based on the observed performances, it appears that the performances mostly attract youth as opposed to older people. The oldest members of the audience were usually invited guests such as government officials. Important to note, is the evident absence of older women storytellers, pointing to the obvious gap between popular theatre and its predecessor, the storytelling practice and its practitioners – rural older women.

Actors

In all the three theatre companies, the actors are unemployed young men and women roughly aged between fifteen and twenty five:

<u>Mama Theatre Group</u>

The membership and leadership of Mama Theatre Group consists of unemployed youths: fifteen males and seven females. The majority of membership comes from generally poor families – often relying on the financial support of one nuclear or extended family member. Most of them are high school graduates who unfortunately did not meet

government's requirements for tertiary scholarship. Unfortunately their poor families obviously cannot afford to sponsor them. As a result, their lack of tertiary or vocational education limits their employment opportunities.

Consequently the group heavily relies on economically struggling volunteers whose immediate need is food for themselves and their families. According to the director, Mpho Rabotsima (a Drama degree holder), this basic need to a large extent hinders the actors' artistic work and commitment to Mama Theatre because they are forced by these circumstances to look for alternative and reliable ways of making money. It is therefore safe to argue that these volunteer actors are driven by the love of theatre and its possibilities. This observation is evidenced by one actor's reminiscence and gloat during an informal discussion, "I remember that time when we (with the director and fellow group members) walked from Mochudi village to Gaborone (about 24 miles) in the middle of the night after a great performance, true artistic spirit!" While this might be the primary driving force for most actors, others find the small sporadic wages better than staying at home.

It is also important to note the gender disparity in membership: fifteen males and seven females. This observation demonstrates the claims I make in Chapter three: that theatre is still controlled by men. In my continued discussions with Rabotsima, the director, there are a number of factors that account for this disparity. One such factor is that some females who are interested in practicing are denied permission by their boyfriends. Thus in addition to the economic struggles faced by all actors, female actors also struggle with gender inequalities. Rabotsima explains that while membership numbers generally fluctuate (because of the reasons discussed above), the female

numbers keep declining, so much that there has been moments when they had no female practitioners at all. Hence, because of economic realities of actors the group generally acts as a transit for employment and educational opportunities.

Moremogolo

Moremogolo's membership consists of fourteen actors: nine females and five men all unemployed. Just like Mama Theatre actors, the youths are Junior and Senior Secondary school leavers. Some of them come from migrant families (mostly with fathers who work for Debswana as mining laborers) while others migrated from the neighboring villages to Jwaneng in search of employment opportunities. So Moremogolo acts as a refuge and an escape from their harsh realities of unemployment and poverty for most of them – it keeps them busy, away from the streets like their fellow youths. Additionally, Moremogolo provides material benefits for them through the monthly wages they receive from the company. Through Moremogolo's arguably relative financial stability – from Debswana's continued support coupled with Presidential Awards - it is able to retain its members who in turn are highly committed to their work and making a change in their local communities

YOHO

Like Mama Theatre and Moremogolo, YOHO's membership is made up of out of school youth volunteers: seven males and five females. In addition to getting an allowance, YOHO provides these volunteers with basic theatrical training as well as training on life skills – building self-esteem and increasing knowledge about sexual and reproductive health issues. These youths in turn impart these skills to their fellow youths in their local communities through theatre, peer education, research and outreach

activities. Membership fluctuates based on funding, but relationships established in communities are maintained through follow up programs such as Seboza clubs. Established in every community, these clubs are targeted at youth between the ages of ten and twenty nine with the goal of reinforcing YOHO's messages shared through performances and other activities. The clubs are long term and are led by youth in these communities who regularly meet with YOHO facilitators to share knowledge, discuss performances, and seek mentorship and guidance. Thus the actors play very important roles as leaders and members of these clubs in their various communities. Most of them regard themselves as role models to other youth in their respective communities.

"On-stage" and "Off-stage" Performances

I use the term "on-stage" performances to refer to public theatrical performances by various theatre groups meant for an audience. These are generally rehearsed, controlled and structured. "Off-stage" performances on the other hand constitute the less-structured verbal and embodied gestures that occur in private one-on-one conversations, funerals, weddings, storytelling performances, workshop discussions as well as casual pre-performance conversations and actions. Thus, the "off-stage" performances can be private (such as one-on-one talks) or semi-public (such as workshop discussions). In my categorization, between these two types of performance spaces lie the post-performance discussions that usually entail question and answer deliberations. The post-performance discussions are some of the main participatory techniques of popular theatre.[3] These discussions occupy a space between the on-stage and off-stage performances in the sense that they are controlled by a facilitator but the audiences' verbal and physical responses

[3] In this system, the facilitator usually addresses the audience and asks questions or makes comments in the hope of sparking a debate or dialogue.

can be spontaneous and less structured. By studying the correspondences and contradictions between these spaces, I am interested in connections and differences between the rhetoric and practice of empowerment –through participation – of communities.

I categorize these spaces neither to separate nor to erect impermeable walls around them, but rather to offer other sites where alternate voices of the subordinate are located. This contention is inspired by James Scott's theorization of resistance and the hidden transcripts of the subordinate. Scott asserts that, "We cannot know how contrived or imposed the performance is unless we can speak, as it were to the performer offstage, out of this particular power-laden context [the onstage performance], or unless the performer suddenly declares openly, on stage that the performances we have previously observed were just a pose" (4).Scott's provocative statement points to the often concealed or misunderstood complexities of power relations between those controlling (theatre practitioners and their funders for instance) the public discourses of empowerment and the beneficiaries of such narratives (communities). Scott's statement aptly suggests that in certain instances these performances are mere hegemonic infused impressions posing as participatory empowerment of communities. The statement further begs this question: whose reality does the on-stage really represent? Scott's theory is relevant since most of the theatre projects are funded by the state and/or NGOs, which, as I discuss in Chapter Four, results in the domestication and sidelining of communities' views when theatre practitioners find themselves pushing the agendas of the funders. Therefore, I claim that the marginal off-stage spaces offer opportunities for counter-discourse articulated by

silences, as well as by verbal and physical gestures. These, I maintain, can increase genuine community participation and dialogue.

Contributions

While related studies have been undertaken in other parts of Africa (such as Catherine Cole's, Penina Mlama's and Karin Barber's works on popular theatre in Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania, respectively), my dissertation will be the first to study popular theatre in Botswana from a gender perspective. Therefore, I was guided by these earlier studies as I examined the issue in a completely different context. The few published works on popular theatre in Botswana (Kerr, Kidd, Mwansa & Bergman and Byam) largely constitute journal articles, reports, and a few case studies on selected community theatre groups, organizations and associations. Although these works constitute important documentation relevant to my study, they do not examine theatre from a gender perspective nor do they situate popular theatre within the Botswana national program (Vision 2016) as one of the political conditions that shape popular theatre in a post-colonial Botswana.

As the first study (conducted by a woman) to locate the role of women in theatre, my study therefore fills the knowledge gap about the participation of Batswana women in theatre, a first step towards locating and analyzing women's presence in the creation of knowledge through theatre. Most importantly, my study contests dominant narratives and questions ways that women in Botswana – particularly those not in a more urban elite position – still manage to tactically engage in issues of importance to them. These alternative sites from which these women at the grassroots speak give insight to their cultural competency; how they use this knowledge to demonstrate an awareness of their

predicaments and how they imagine change. This will expand knowledge on popular theatre practice generally and in relation to women in Botswana.

One other unique contribution of my ethnographic research is my insider-outsider position, i.e., my cultural and gender identities. With only one exception, all of the available studies on popular theatre in Botswana have been authored by male expatriates. Though my positionality shifts (as I demonstrate in Chapter One), the insider part of my identity (that of a Motswana woman) provides another unique contribution: my culturally-situated methodology is informed by my positionality. However, my outsider position (that of a PhD student studying in the United States) in certain contexts automatically places me outside the circles of my research participants. These multiple positionalities allow me to go beyond the narrowness of a single identity, in turn allowing me to offer deeper and wide ranging analyses of my observations.

Objectives

Since no work of art is born in a vacuum, my study specifically seeks to examine the dialectical relationship between the environment within which the performances exist and the work produced. As such, these are some of the questions that guide my analysis of the observed performances: How are the performances both shaped by and a response to the political, economic and socio-cultural environments? To what extent are communities involved in the play-making process (e.g., identifying themes, their views on the causes and possible solutions to the problems they face, etc.)? What is the nature of power relations between the artist and the state (as the funder)? To what extent are performances influenced by the artist/state/community relationship?

Research Sites

In order to examine the approaches used by popular theatre groups (independently and/or in partnership with the state) to enhance the well-being of oppressed communities in post-colonial Botswana, I worked as a participant observer in three theatre groups: Youth Health Organization (YOHO) headquarters theatre group, Moremogolo Extension Theatre Trust and Mama Theatre Group. YOHO is located in the capital city of Gaborone; Moremogolo is located in the diamond-mining town of Jwaneng about 170 km (106 miles) south of Gaborone, while Mama Theatre is based in Ramotswa village. Being located in a village and yet so close to city, the group represents a blend of rural and cosmopolitan membership (unemployed youth commuting between the city and their home village) and perceptions of social concerns.

I chose these groups because they engage with minority and vulnerable members of society, such as those marginalized ethically and by gender inequalities, as part of their objectives. Furthermore, the varied geographical locations helped me to obtain a more balanced representation of the geopolitical and socioeconomic contexts within which popular theatre groups operate. The other deciding factor was the fact these were some of the few groups that had ongoing productions at the time of my research. Varied as the geographical locations are, the voices and experiences of these theatre groups are not in any way a generalization of Botswana popular theatre companies/groups. In my observations, I was mainly attentive to the level of community participation, which I determined by asking these questions: Who decided on the theme? What inspired the theme? Who is the intended audience? How is the audience involved in the formation of the play? From whose perspective is the narrative told? My analyses combine the verbal

and/or embodied audience responses with my own interpretations. It is important to note that the directors of all three groups are men. As I demonstrate in my analyses, most of them (as controllers of the narratives) do not always factor in gender-specific concerns within the framework of their projects. This resultant omission is largely because the men still operate within patriarchal values which in turn yield discourses and behaviors that demonize women even as they try to empower them.

FIGURE 1: MAP OF BOTSWANA AND LOCATION OF RESEARCH SITES

These sites broadly reveal that funded performances have minimal community participation, in the sense that the theme is decided by the funding organization. Even though the chosen theme might be relevant to a specific community, it is told from the perspective of the funder.

In order to investigate institutional and/or financial support for theatre in Botswana, I included informal interviews and discussions with state officials in the Women's Affairs Department (WAD) and the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC). The DAC and WAD are government departments charged with the support of theatre and women, respectively.[4] In my discussions with these officials, I was interested in determining the state's direct and/or indirect advancement of the well-being of women in rural areas, demonstrated by financial support for theatre companies that in part address social issues that affect these women. Specifically, I wanted to know: How is financial support administered? What theatre groups benefit more from the funding? How does the funding relate to the type of work produced? In this aspect of my research, the findings reveal that authoritative and financial advocacy play a fundamental and paradoxical role in the survival of popular theatre. Additionally, I find that the government's financial support for theatre is more comprehensive on paper than it is in practice.

As a way of pointing to traditional sites and to (re-)position rural women in performance, I attended storytelling performances. These encounters, such as the one I had with Mma Mogorosi, serve as part of the aforementioned off-stage sites for women's hidden transcripts and embodied knowledge.

[4] The DAC provides administrative and grant support for the arts, including theatre. The WAD is charged with co-coordinating gender mainstreaming (at the policy-making level) but works with local communities, groups and organizations (governmental and non-governmental) to promote program planning and execution in areas of common concern.

Methodology

Performance Ethnography

The bulk of my research relies on relational encounters with my research participants in specific sites: both on- and off-stage performances. As I perform ethnography in observation and writing, I was guided by Jose Limon's (1994) and feminist ethnographer Cindy Garcia's (2008) strategic demonstrations of rich and textured descriptions as well as social interactions taking place in all my encounters with my research participants. I use these on-stage and off-stage choreographies to draw broad conclusions about my observations as a way of situating the research responses into a larger historical and societal context.

Borrowing from these ideas, I can critically assess how bodies relate to one another in space and how this relationship supports or refutes the utterances made by these bodies. It is with such considerations in mind that I encounter my research participants in various spaces. For instance, as I watched performances on gender-based violence and ethnic marginalization, I analyzed how bodies on-stage place themselves (or are placed) according to gender and ethnicity and how their positions are predicated on broader contexts of patriarchy, age and ethnicity.

Uniquely, my methodology is informed by my positionality (as an insider-outsider) and relies heavily on culturally-situated ways of building rapport with my participants, such as "*Susu ilela suswana gore suswana le ene a go ilele*" (elders should respect youngsters so that they can respect them in turn). The specific experiential knowledge that comes with my insider positionality was instrumental in guiding my interactions with youth since almost all of the theatre group members were younger than

me. I employed *susu ilela suswana gore suswana le ene a go ilele* as a strategy to negotiate the differences of age. This aspect of my positionality also guided my culturally-gendered verbal and embodied interactions with my research participants.

Furthermore, in order to be reflexive of my unique insider-outsider positionality as I performed and wrote ethnography, I relied on the work of post-colonial feminist ethnographers and feminist geographers. Gayatri Spivak, Farhana Sultana, Kirin Narayan, Mona Domosh and Jayati Lal write on the importance of reflexivity, as well as on the dilemmas and challenges of fieldwork (including international fieldwork) and of being an insider who returns 'home' to do research. These earlier works helped me attend to my shifting positionality and to the fact that, even though I have access to my research participants because of our cultural commonalities, there are also differences and inequalities that come with age, class, gender, geographic location and ethnicity. Furthermore, there are undeniable power inequalities between me (as a researcher) and my research participants. In order to acknowledge and dismantle this researcher (knower)-research participant (known) binary, I am reflexive about my failed encounters with certain research participants, and consider these situations as examples of research participants exercising their often-ignored power.

As a research participant in these theatre companies, I engaged in different off-stage activities that granted me closer access to my participants: I travelled with some on tours, and in some cases held one-on-one private meetings. Also, I often had casual group discussions that we called "workshops" before rehearsals. In these encounters, our casual discussions covered topics including: their individual and collective experiences as young people; the challenges they face as out-of-school young people; the challenges of being

unemployed young women and men in and out of love relationships; what it means to be a Motswana woman and man; differentiating between the characters they play on stage and the realities of their lives; how their gender identities affect how they work with one another in a group and how their different genders and experiences bring different perspectives to the play-making process and the creation of plots. The primary purpose of the "workshops" was to get to know each other better off-stage and also for me to understand their problems and intentions. During discussions I mainly focused on the social interactions, as well as on the verbal communication between the members and myself, and among the members as I watched and listened to what they talked about and how they discussed their issues. These detailed and impassioned off-stage discussions provided a backdrop for the performances, allowing me to make connections and/or identify contradictions between the on-stage and off-stage narratives in my analyses of the performances.

During on-stage performances, I took notes about the audience's embodied and verbal responses. Typically, popular theatre audiences usually interject during performances. During post-performance discussions, as I listened to what the audience members' contributions, I paid special attention to moments of what I term "performed participation", whereby audiences perform participation (i.e., when they give the practitioners what they think the practitioners want to know). This happened frequently when there were prizes (t-shirts and hats for instance) to be won for participation. I was alert to responses of silence, private nudges and exchanges of looks between audience members. As I made observations and wrote my notes, I was self-reflexive about how I inserted myself versus how I was inserted by my research participants into networks of

power relations, such as where I was invited/expected to sit versus where and why I chose where to sit.

After performances, I often had one-on-one discussions with willing audience members to discuss their personal interpretations of the performances. I did this to include the voices of shy people or those who may not be willing to speak in a public space. This method was also helpful in drawing out audience members' interpretations about sensitive and controversial issues when they would otherwise refrain from publicly declaring their positions.

Performing ethnography in these various sites allowed me to engage in detailed and impassioned discussions and interactions that provided backdrops for the on-stage performances, which in turn broadened my analyses. Most importantly, this method helped me to make connections and/or reveal contradictions between the on-stage and off-stage narratives, helping me determine whose narrative was being performed on stage. Furthermore, the method shed some light on the broader question of how communities are involved in the formation of plays.

Archival Research and Informal Interviews

I conducted archival research to investigate the genealogy of popular theatre and state/artist partnerships in Botswana. For the history of popular theatre in Botswana I mined the Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS), Botswana National Library Services, and the University of Botswana library, which has a special section called 'Botswana Collection'. These archives are all located in Gaborone, the capital city. While I obtained few documents, one of the more useful items came from the BNARS archive: a detailed report of the National Popular Theatre Workshop in 1978. As

I read the documents, I attended to the identities, genders, affiliations and locations of the authors while asking historiographical questions: Who is documenting the information? For what purpose? What are his/her desires and interests? What is his/her affiliation? How do these desires inform the methodology of his/her account? For whom is he/she writing? Who is included in this history?

Together, the documents shed some light on when and how popular theatre began, as well as how it has developed (or not) over the years. It is important to note that all authors of the records are men, and they are mainly outsiders. Not unexpectedly, there are no records by or on women and theatre/performance. Hence, the records reveal a practical shift from the initial goals of popular theatre as stipulated by Morake. Although the issues facing communities typically changed over time, some communities continue to experience the issues of unemployment and alcohol abuse.

In order to investigate the government's support for theatre, I conducted informal interviews with government officials at DAC, as discussed earlier. The interviews were supplemented with records about how theatre companies are documented, the government/theatre partnerships and the actual contracts and guidelines. The interviews addressed the questions: What is the trend of government sponsorship? How is funding administered? Which companies are sponsored and which ones are rejected? What are the criteria used for sponsorship? What is the basis for rejection? What does this say about the state's expectations of its citizens? What are the conditions of sponsorship? How do these conditions affect popular theatre's pedagogical and ideological concerns? Is there documentation of dissonance between any government department and a theatre company? If so, how has it been reported? From whose perspective? What is cited as the

source of conflict? Based on the information I obtained from DAC, there are no records of conflict between the state and theatre companies, and there are no records of rejections.

For comparative purposes, I held personal interviews with the directors of various theatre companies. In addition to the interviews, I also examined theatre companies' profiles. Through these interviews and documents I strove to glean additional information about: the documentation of partnerships between the theatre companies and the state; if and how dissonance has been reported; the documentation of the history of social issues addressed over the years; the relationship between the social issues addressed and the presence of women in power positions within specific theatre companies, and; the relationship between the issues and the political and social contexts. I observed that some theatre companies were not willing to share financial contracts.

In addition to comparing the material provided by theatre companies and the government, I was interested in determining how popular theatre companies measure the "success" of popular theatre projects. For instance, is success based on the opinion of the theatre companies, that of the donors or that of the communities? This study reveals that success tends to be measured according to statistics; for example, how many people attended the performance or how many times the performance was staged. These numbers are the most important metrics for funders. Some theatre companies additionally measure their success according to the awards they have received.

Structure

This dissertation is organized into four chapters. Chapter One, titled "From a Space of Betweenness: Navigating Reciprocal and Contested Relationships," is an in-

depth and careful account of my encounters with my research participants in various research sites, including YOHO, Moremogolo, Mma Mogorosi's storytelling performance, and my failed encounters with Blank Theatre. This chapter gives insight into a methodology that is largely informed by my positionality and relies heavily on culturally-situated ways of building rapport with my participants. In these public (on-stage) and semipublic (off-stage) performances, I pay particular attention to the embodied relational dynamics among the different subjectivities of my participants, as well as between my participants and myself, with special consideration of the social interactions and significance of the spatial location in relation to the performances under observation.

In Chapter One, I also actively weave together my experiential knowledge, my research participants' voices and interpretations, and the theorizations of post-colonial feminist ethnographers and geographers (see, for example, Farhana Sultana, Linda Smith, Kirin Narayan, Linda McDowell, Jayati Lal, Audrey Kobayashi, Cindi Katz, Melissa Gilbert, Gayatri Spivak and Mona Domosh) - who write about reflexivity, positionality and the challenges that researchers from the global south, studying in the west, face when they return home to do research - to demonstrate the importance of positionality and self-reflexivity in navigating power relations in the field. With embodied accounts of relationship-forging, failed relationships and collaborations, reversed power relations, ambivalences, tensions and discomforts, I unpack the problematic aspects of my shifting positionality as I reveal the field as a site of reciprocal and contested relationships.

Chapter Two, titled "Status of Popular Theatre and Women in Botswana," provides the history and development of popular theatre in Africa generally and in Botswana specifically. The Chapter also engages with theoretical questions and debates

surrounding the potential of popular theatre to act as a tool for social change. I make the argument that although popular theatre, through community participation, can be a tool that allows marginalized members of society to address their concerns and challenge dominant structures of power, the very concept of "community participation" can be problematic when it leaves the concerned communities out of the decision-making process, thereby perpetuating dominant discourses at the expense of the minority's. Engaging with community theatre scholars and practitioners such as Ross Kidd, Sonja Kuftinec, Augusto Boal, David Kerr, Zakes Mda, Micere Mugo, Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, Ola Johansson and Praise Zenenga, I link the failure of meaningful community involvement to the tendency of practitioners to treat communities as stable and natural. I give specific examples of how this functions in Botswana; for instance, how certain projects ignore differences of gender, class and age. For instance I disagree with scholars such as Dale Byam who commend *Laedza Batanani* founders for the use of the *kgotla*[5] as a performance space.[6] In particular I critique the use of the *kgotla* for theatre performances (supposed democratic communication) in this period (early 70s) given the traditional use of *kgotla* as a space for male adults at the exclusion of women and youth. Hence I argue that it contradicted popular theatre's goal of democratic communication.

Using examples, I critique some of the selected gendered themes that exclude women but complicate this by arguing that while those with the power to select exclude women, women in these specific instances still create resistance in these marginal

[5] The Setswana traditional public forum.

[6] Even though Byam aptly critiques Laedza Batanani project for its failure (amongst others) to consider economic factors that contribute to villagers' problems, she however commends it for its use of the kgotla as a traditional meeting place.

discourses by silencing themselves – choosing to be silent. I demonstrate how the silence ruptures in the off-stage encounter with Lesolobe (my research participant).

The chapter further offers a new critique of popular theatre in Botswana located in what I call the "invasive encounter" between Setswana traditional performances (such as storytelling) and popular theatre, where the latter was introduced and viewed as the 'better' knowledge system– I substantiate this claim with Minister Morake's speech at the workshop where he says the founders of popular theatre as facilitators at this workshop know better than the workshop participants.

There is a short section in Chapter Two on the social position of women in Botswana. This background is important as it provides a context for understanding my study: the need to locate and analyze the role of women in popular theatre. I then demonstrate that the storytelling performance is one of the sites where certain women's knowledge and power is located.

Chapter Three, titled "What has gender got to do with it? Connections and Contradictions of On- and Off-Stage Performances," offers analyses of three performances: *Alcohol and Drug Abuse* (by Moremogolo), *The Flower* and *Don't Do That!* by YOHO. Although the plays are performed in different geographic locations (Jwaneng, Lobatse and Gaborone), they are connected by their engagement with the themes of alcohol abuse, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. After the analyses of individual plays and their specificities, I analyze Moremogolo's and YOHO's *The Flower* in juxtaposition in order to compare their different methods and approaches to the theme of gender-based violence. For instance, while Moremogolo engages in a narrative that de-genders this gendered issue and blames the victim, YOHO explicitly engages with the

issue, underscoring its multifaceted manifestation, exploring and calling out various factors that cause domestic violence. Similarly, I discuss Moremogolo's alcohol play and YOHO's *Don't Do That!* to highlight how they are both didactic narratives that blame communities' poverty on their immoral choices. Both performances are loud with explicit symbols and messages of Christianity (colonial legacy) as the solution to the problems of alcoholism and poverty.

Therefore, grounding my argument in the African feminist theorizations of Modupe Kolawole, Obioma Nnaemeka, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Ogundipe Leslie, Juliana Nfa-Abbeyi, and Bessie Head, I offer a gender analysis that incorporates verbal and embodied performances of the off-stage, on-stage, and post-performances, as well as my own interpretations. I argue that until popular theatre practitioners meaningfully center marginalized groups (such as women) in their interventions, the on-stage performances will always perpetuate uncontested dominant male constructed narratives and discourses entrenched in gendered myths and stereotypes.

Lastly, in Chapter Three I propose that in situations when popular theatre interventions (because of various circumstances) assume the position of "speaking for"—such as when they name the problems for the communities, as demonstrated above—the off-stage sites become arenas where the subordinate communities can reaccord and reposition themselves as speaking subjects. I proffer that linking the two spaces together ensures a somewhat satisfactory participation and guards against usurpation of marginalized voices. I am convinced that putting the two spaces in conversation will permit popular theatre interventions to integrate the voices of the marginalized, enabling these groups to speak out against the problems they face.

Chapter Four, titled "State Funding and Popular Theatre: A Paradoxical Relationship," is an assessment of the role of governmental funding as articulated in Botswana's National Policy on Culture, which was set "to promote our pride and nationhood and to enable us to own the future by being a tolerant, compassionate, just and caring nation" (National Policy, sec. 1.6). The chapter argues that, while government advocacy and financial support are necessary for the survival of popular theatre, very often these state-funded collaborations result in subtle and latent conflict, which in turn can lead to some level of subjugation. This chapter builds on the claims made in Chapter Three by revealing that funding can lead to situations where theatre groups (and, in turn, communities) have little choice when it comes to the subjects and themes of performances, as they are ultimately determined by the supporting agency or government department. As I established earlier, popular theatre generally operates under the national program, Vision 2016.

I support my argument via analyses of three performances: Moremogolo's *Alcohol and Drug Abuse* (fully funded by the government), YOHO's *Your Excellency* (partially funded by the government) and Mama Theatre's *The Creature* (independent). The three performances provide examples of different state/artist/community relationships. Through *His Excellency*, YOHO engages in an explicit kowtowing to the president in order to win state funding. In this patronage relationship, the artist views himself as the laborer. Similarly, sponsored by the Ministry of Health, Moremogolo completely aligns itself with the government's agenda and in turn partakes in national/official discourses that simplify community issues by blaming the victim. This

exemplifies a doctor/patient relationship whereby the state and the artist diagnose the community and prescribes a solution to the problem, creating a theatre of domestication.

In contrast, *The Creature* demonstrates how certain artists' works are shaped by political and socio-cultural climates. In this case, Mama Theatre's *The Creature* (based on ethnicity and cultural diversity) engages in a counter-hegemonic discourse as it completely aligns itself with the ethnically marginalized Basarwa (and therefore not with the state), by alluding to the controversial relocation of the Basarwa from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve.

The Conclusion of this thesis, titled "The Return: Retrospective for the Future," is a "return" in multiple ways. First, it is a return to my lingering memories of my childhood experiences of storytelling performances by my grandmother – the authority with which she employed this medium to democratically communicate with her young audience in her private home. In order to productively recreate this memory as a way of envisioning the future, I invite the reader to return with me to my encounter with MmaMogorosi, a non-academic intellectual whose choice of the story I argue, is not haphazard, but rather that it is a flexible yet carefully-thought-out response to the context and audience of the story. I offer storytelling as a site for old women in rural areas to respond to their predicaments. In this site, women can self-identify problems specific to their unique environments and circumstances – an alternative space where state-serving popular theatre narratives can be countered.

CHAPTER ONE

From a Space of Betweenness: Navigating Reciprocal and Contested Relationships

In order to examine how popular theatre is used as a tool for increasing community participation with the aim of enhancing the well-being of oppressed members of society, I worked with three theatre groups as a participant observer. This chapter is a demonstration of embodied relational encounters with my research participants in specific sites. It describes my methodology, which was informed by my shifting insider-outsider positionality and heavily reliant on culturally-situated means of building rapport with my research participants. It provides an account of how I negotiated relationships with my participants: how alliances were formed, failed alliance-making attempts, and successful collaborations.

The three theatre groups (Youth Health Organization (YOHO) headquarters theatre group, Moremogolo Extension Theatre Trust, and Mama Theatre) are situated in different parts of the country. YOHO is located in the capital city of Gaborone, Moremogolo is located in the diamond-mining town of Jwaneng about 170 km (106 miles) south of Gaborone while Mama Theatre is based in Ramotswa, about 30 km (25 miles) south of Gaborone. I chose these groups because they engage with minority and vulnerable members of society and because they incorporate gender issues as part of their objectives. The varied geographic locations offer a more balanced representation of the geopolitical and socioeconomic contexts within which popular theatre groups operate.

Additionally, my approach historicizes research participants, generating insight on the heterogeneity of women in Botswana both generally and specifically within rural and marginalized communities. In her article, “Towards a More Fully Reciprocal Feminist

Inquiry," Mona Domosh notes that as researchers we historicize ourselves "by exploring how our own personal, emotional, political and cultural agendas and worldviews shape our methods, analyses and interpretations, *but* we tend not to historicize our research subjects" (109). By failing to accomplish this, we essentialize our subjects' differences, thus locking them into a time and space. She therefore argues that we should afford our research participants the same subjectivity that we grant ourselves (109) As a response to this call, in my own research I am mindful of the fact that while women do share common concerns, it is important to pay attention to the class, ethnic, geographic and age differences even within marginalized communities: what may be "good for" a woman in the shanty town may not necessarily have the same meaning for a woman in Sekoma village. For instance, commonalities and differences in individual and group understandings of the well-being of (and threats to) women in these locations are to a large extent shaped by the broader social, political, economic and cultural conditions in these specific locations. In addition, in my analyses of performances, I am attentive to how theatre practitioners engage with narratives that separate communities' problems from these broader conditions in order to blame communities. However, it is important to note that the voices and experiences of the theatre groups I worked with are not in any way a generalization about Botswana popular theatre companies/groups.

The bulk of my research relies on physical relational encounters with my research participants in specific sites (i.e., both on- and off-stage performances) including theatre performances, storytelling performances, workshops, one-on-one private informal discussions, funerals and *kgotla* meetings.[7] In these public (on-stage) and semipublic

[7] A *kgotla* is a public meeting, an indigenous community forum or traditional court of a Botswana village. It is a venue "where chiefs (*dikgosi*), communicated directly with their subjects, creating a

(off-stage) performances, I pay particular attention to the embodied relational dynamics among the different subjectivities of my participants, as well as between myself and my participants, with special consideration of the social interactions and significance of spatial location in relation to the various performances under observation.

As already mentioned, in an effort to study government's support for theatre in Botswana, I worked with government officials at the two departments charged with the support of theatre and women – the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) and the Women's Affairs Department (WAD) respectively. I further discuss this government support for theatre in Chapter Four of the dissertation.

These departments provided most of the information in the form of documents, which gave me an opportunity to go beyond *what* information was given to me, to *how* the information was given. For instance, I was able to explore how commonalities and differences (e.g., preexisting relationships, gender and education) between each research participant and me influenced what information they provided and the manner in which it was given.[8] The interpretations and knowledge generated from our encounters were mostly a result of how I was inserted in grids of power relations with these two participants.

somewhat democratic institution that permitted (within limits) free speech while at the same time allowing the *kgosi* to test public acceptance of matters already discussed in private with his counselor, advisers [and his wife]" (Denbow and Thebe, 2006: 22). In the past women and minors were excluded from such deliberations. They were only included in other public traditional performances such as harvest celebrations. However, independence (1966) ushered in some changes including the inclusion of women and youth at *kgotla* meetings, although men still dominate in numbers.

[8] The Principal Gender Officer at WAD, Miss Tamapo Wole, went an extra mile to assist me because she felt the need to support another woman, and she had also studied abroad and could therefore identify with my "local scholar returning home" position. At the DAC, the Assistant Culture Officer, Mr. Tshireletso Modikwa, was a former student of mine.

As a local Motswana woman and native speaker of Setswana [9] who was academically trained in the United States, I occupy a unique position in this study as both an insider and outsider, a position that Cindi Katz, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Trinh Minh-ha refer to as "a space of betweenness," "a state of moving across boundaries," and "not quite the same, not quite the other," respectively. As these scholars argue, this is a position occupied by most postcolonial women. As an insider, I can gain relatively easier access to most of my research participants because of my deep affiliation with their language and culture. While similar historical and political processes might locate me with my research participants, locals such as myself can nevertheless shift to the "other" through class privilege (Jayati Lal). In many instances I was highly aware of my class and educational privilege (through material and symbolic differences). Thus my position shifted to that of an outsider in such moments. My continuous shifting position and those of my participants in the research process makes the research field what Domosh calls "a site of reciprocal and contested relationships" (110) between my research participants and me: a space for negotiating these various locations and subjectivities I simultaneously felt a part of and apart from. It is important to be reflexive about how I succeeded or failed to navigate the ambivalences, tensions, and discomforts that came with this unstable subjectivity. What follows, then are excerpts of my journey, of the continually-negotiated relationships in some of my research sites, and accounts of the dilemmas posed by this in-between position I occupy.

[9] A Motswana is a person from Botswana. Setswana refers to both the language and culture of Botswana.

Youth Health Organization (YOHO)

YOHO is a youth-led community mobilization initiative in Botswana aimed at curbing new HIV/AIDS infections among youth. They use theatre as one of their communication strategies geared towards "edutainment": education through entertainment. YOHO has a total of nine affiliate sites in all districts of the country: Letlhakane, Francistown, Selebi-Phikwe, Kasane, Lobatse, Hukuntsi, Ghanzi, Serowe and Gaborone. This selection of districts is probably in recognition of the heterogeneity of youth due in part to their geopolitical, cultural and ethnic variations. For instance, Letlhakane and Selebi-Phikwe are mining towns with the highest HIV/AIDS rates; Kasane and Ghanzi are tourist areas with a wide gap between the rich and the poor; Hukuntsi is mostly populated by some of the indigenous and minority ethnic groups; Gaborone and Francistown are the two cities in the country, the former being the capital city. My interpretation of YOHO's awareness of the specificities of location-based concerns is that the initiative acknowledges the significance of place, of how the politics and developments (or lack of) in that place shape the worldview, problems and decision-making of those who live there.

My identity as a mother played an important role in my choice of research sites. Since my children and I reside in Gaborone, I decided to work with the group located in Gaborone West, one of the poverty-stricken parts of the capital city. This made it easier for me to commute between my child's school and my research sites. The group consists of out-of-school youth volunteers who, according to one of the group members, Tshiamo, "receive training in life skills (peer pressure, goal setting, decision making, relationships, HIV/AIDS) and theatrical skills," among others.

After driving around Gaborone West for a good thirty minutes, trying to find YOHO offices, I finally arrive at the fenced three-caravans-turned offices. Since I still have five minutes before my meeting, I decide to sit under a tree near the first caravan where I begin to wonder about the implication of such office structures, which are very common among NGOs in Botswana. Do they suggest, perhaps, their lack of permanence, or their reliance on international and government funding for survival? I am startled out of my thoughts by a loud, energetic "Sboza Pabalelo! Howzit?" (a casual greeting in youth jargon) and a hug from Mr. Vuyisile Otukile, YOHO's executive director, dressed in a pair of jeans and a casual gray shirt—acting and clothed like a typical youth.

After this brief casual encounter, he invites me into his office, offers me a seat and proceeds to his on the other side of the table. The casual ambiance continues as we reminisce about our university days as members of the university traveling theatre. Remembering him as an active member of the Student Representative Council, (the minister of culture), it is not surprising to find him in such a leadership position. In this moment, I am thankful for our acquaintance and what this insider position offers: an opportunity for easier access into the theatre group. However, I am also mindful of the predicaments associated with this position. I need to be truthful about my observations without jeopardizing my relationship with Otukile.

We proceed to exchange our experiences and observations about the state of theatre in Botswana (I as a teacher of popular theatre and he as a former director of Ghetto Artists, a popular theatre company). Not a great fan of formal interviews, and treading carefully, I take advantage of this informal discussion to communicate both my interest in working with the YOHO theatre group and my research goals. Without

hesitation, he interjects by waving his right index finger (signaling "wait a second") with squinted eyes. My heart sinks and I lean forward, cupping my face with my palms as I prepare myself for the worst: refusal to work with the group. He spins his chair, presenting me with his back (which I read as a confirmation of my fear), pulls out a big three-ring binder and hands it to me, excitedly saying, "This might be of help to you!" He explains that it is a country-by-country compilation of reports on women and theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa, excluding Botswana. Holding back a sigh of relief, I thank him and point to the existing lacuna—as evidenced by the report—which my research stands to fill.

As the discussion continues, he tells me about his Master's project and his dream of pursuing a PhD in the future. I am brought to an honest reminder of my responsibilities as a researcher when Otukile leans forward and looks straight into my eyes while stating, "But you know Pabalelo, I'm concerned about researchers who conduct studies, take information from us and then disappear" (informal discussion, December 10, 2010). Desperate to assure him of my clear intentions, I nod repeatedly, maintaining eye contact though feeling very uncomfortable, especially after being given the reports. I wonder if this has always been his concern or if it was triggered by something that I said. After a lot of thought about this comment, I come to the realization that he is locating me with my institutional affiliations with the United States as a representation of the hegemonic West. His dissatisfaction resonates with Spivak's (1988) assertion that the process of research is in a way always colonial insofar as it "others" and objectifies the research subjects into something from which knowledge has to be extracted and taken back to "here," the West. In this case, I fall into this category: Sultana, who agrees with Spivak, adds that even if

done by someone from the Global South, "conducting international fieldwork involves being attentive to histories of colonialism, development, globalization and local realities, to avoid exploitative research or perpetuation of relations of domination and control" (Sultana 378-79). Thus, by situating me in this manner, Otukile is marking my position of geo-politicized/researcher difference and makes his disapproval clear.

I am, at the same time, humbled by his willingness, as a fellow researcher, to assume the position of the often-exploited research participant. Here, I am reminded of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's similar argument about the importance of continuous commitment and reporting back to our research participants who helped create the knowledge (15). Probably sensing my discomfort, Otukile returns to his initial casual tone as he enthusiastically says, "I'm excited about your project, my sister, and I hope to learn from it as I get ready to pursue my PhD. . . . So feel free to work with the theatre group and your ideas are welcome. . . . " (Otukile). Although I welcome the invitation, the subtext of his statement is clear; he expects me to share the knowledge created in this project. The expectation echoes in my mind even as we shake hands at the end of our conversation. As he walks me out, he advises me to start right away since the group has already started rehearsals for an upcoming theatre festival in Francistown on January 25, 2011.

Excited about obtaining "permission" from the "boss," I immediately approach the first female members of the group I find standing under a tree outside the third caravan, waiting for others to start rehearsal. I realize that they are gradually lowering their voices as I come nearer; I decide not to get too close, lest I completely invade their private moment. I join them in their standing position with the three of us forming an

isosceles triangle; the two of them closer together, facing each other, and me at a distance. I greet them with enthusiasm and introduce myself as a University of Botswana lecturer. However, I am brought to a rather cold awareness of my outsider position in this moment by the exchange of unwelcoming looks between the two females. After introducing myself, I first look at Gaone, expecting her to introduce herself. Instead she greets me and turns to her friend Tshiamo, who in turn hesitantly greets me before returning her friend's gaze. There is clear tension and awkwardness in this failed attempt to connect with my participants. Though I am disappointed in myself, I try not to show it as I proceed to ask when rehearsal starts before excusing myself to the bathroom as a way to give myself time to rethink my approach and to give them space. It is in this moment that I realize two things. First, I recognize that I might have unconsciously assumed equality and commonality between myself and the two young girls because of our nationality and gender, while totally disregarding other aspects of identities and markers of difference such as age, education and class (for instance, I was carrying a borrowed laptop computer; a precaution I was taking because my own had recently been stolen during a car break-in). Second, I understand that getting permission from the executive director does not equal automatic access to the theatre group or its members. It was my responsibility to initiate relationships with my research participants while being aware that, as Sultana aptly states:

> The mutuality of [research] processes does not hinge only on the researcher, even if researchers feel the burden to initiate, sustain, and nurture such relationships. The roles of people at the other end of the potential relationships are important to the ways that the relationships are formed and play out (381).

Even though there was little I could have done to change such overt differences, perhaps I should not have rushed the encounter; rather, I should have taken the time to gradually switch gears from talking to the director to talking to the girls. This would have allowed me to prepare myself mentally by acknowledging, rather than downplaying, the irreconcilable hierarchy inherent in this position of difference.

During my subsequent encounter with the group the next day, having agreed to meet them two hours before rehearsal, the negotiation process is more promising. I intentionally arrive thirty minutes before our meeting. Ms. Lerato Leatlhama, the monitoring and evaluation officer, ushers me into the tiny rehearsal room at the back of the third caravan, with the words, "The space is all yours, do as you please with it" (Leatlhama). I move all the desks and tables against the wall before comfortably placing myself on the floor and then wait to see how the group members place themselves in the room in relation to me.

As they arrive, both individually and in pairs and groups, it is interesting to observe how culturally trained these young bodies are and how this training facilitates their gendered sitting arrangement in this space. The males impulsively (seemingly) place themselves on my left while the females sit on my right as we all sit in a semicircle. This behavior corresponds to my general observations at *kgotla* meetings (traditional public meeting forums) and recent observations made at two funerals at Mochudi village and Lobatse, where men and women do not sit together in the same space. Rather, the two genders either sit facing each other (in Lobatse) or parallel to each to each other (in Mochudi). This spontaneous or predetermined spatial pattern of these bodies is indicative of the classical gender discrepancy that has proved to be a general pattern in line with a

male-privileged division of labor and household economics in the most seriously AIDS-stricken[10] countries in Africa, such as Botswana, as observed by scholars such as Ola Johansson and by theatre members of the two theatre groups studied here.

The people on my immediate right and left have left spaces that could each fit up to three people while they sit in closer proximity to one another. At a glance, this arrangement resembles that of a Setswana storytelling performance: my research participants have placed me in the position of the storyteller. A closer look suggests that the empty spaces between myself and my immediate "neighbors" are an indication that they have categorized me as an outsider, probably out of respect for my age (culturally it is considered rude to sit in close proximity to the elders unless they are your parents or relatives) or perhaps simply because I am a stranger to them. This sitting arrangement, with me in the leadership position, could also suggest that they assumed I was going to address them, as opposed to the equal communication that I had in mind.

After making sure that they have all taken their places, I start mentally counting them; there are five females and seven males. Inspired by the spatial positioning, I playfully begin with a storytelling opening formula: "*Banyana! Banyana! Gatwe e rile!*" (to which they responded with laughter, including Tshiamo and Gaone, clearly unexpectedly but pleasantly being reminded of grandma stories). "*It is said that there was a young woman by the name of Pabalelo, a Motswana adult student at a faraway place, across oceans. As she progressed with her studies, she realized that she didn't know as much as she should or was expected to, and so she decided to come home to shamelessly learn from much younger women and men* (pointing at them, strategically downplaying

[10] Cited by my participants as one the leading factors that threaten the well-being of women.

the power inherent in my position) *here at YOHO, Gaborone West. That is the beginning of the story. The rest of the story will be told by You* (pointing at them) *and me!"*

To my relief, they unanimously laugh. This approach was my sincere effort to blend in as much as I could by playing with my different positionalities to create rapport with my participants, to remind them that I may be studying in the U.S. but I was still a Motswana just like them. Always aware of my differences (age, class and education) and the inevitable power relations in them, in all my following interactions (workshops, rehearsals and focus group discussions) with the YOHO group I consciously decided to always dress casually (jeans and t-shirts); to always leave my laptop at home (following the realization that it became an overt marker of difference that created the distance between the girls and me); to never sit on a chair while they sat on the floor (to avoid vertical hierarchies); and to always speak to them with respect regardless of age. As the Setswana saying goes: "*susu ilela suswana gore suswana le ene a go ilele"* (elders should respect youngsters so that they can respect them in turn). Although I cannot claim that I gained complete access—as Kirin Narayan aptly argues, there is never an authentic insider perspective (31)—I can safely say I earned their trust, especially that of the two girls, Tshiamo and Portia. During the off-stage activities (workshops and focus group discussions) we discussed topics such as their individual and collective experiences as youths working with other youths; the challenges they faced as out-of-school young people; the struggles of being unemployed young women and men in and out of love relationships; what it means to be a Motswana woman; differentiating between the characters they play on stage and the realities of their lives; how their genders affect the way they work with one another in a group and how their different genders and

experiences bring different perspectives to the play-making process and the creation of plots. During these discussions I watched humbly as the youths gradually took off their public masks, more for themselves than for me, and made themselves vulnerable, opening up to me in ways I never expected or imagined; so much so that oftentimes my position as a researcher dissolved into that of a friend and confidante, earning me the name "Sis P."

These off-stage activities provided them "the space to get personal with one another in a group, to know each other beyond the on-stage performances" (Queen).

Drawing inspiration from James Scott's theorizations of resistance and hidden transcripts of the subordinate, I argue that within the framework of my research, these activities help uncover connections and contradictions between on- and off-stage performances and reveal whose narratives are being told on stage.

However, it is important to note that although these off-stage activities become the safe, private sites of the hidden transcripts of these groups (transcripts that do not always become public); they are not always or ever completely hidden in my presence. Therefore I cannot claim to have full access to these private transcripts. A full analysis of the contents of these transcripts in relation to how they serve women will be conducted in Chapter Three.

Of great value to me is the knowledge that although my relationships with the youth were unequal, and my access partial, I was nevertheless faithful and respectful to them – hence my continued varying relationships with them. Even though I could not identify with some of their painful experiences—their health issues (revealed to me in private one-on-one conversations), unemployment, poverty, etc.—I interacted with them

in ways that yielded adequately trusting relations. With knowledge gained from these off-stage engagements in specific contexts, I was able to sufficiently make connections and see contradictions and tensions between the on-stage and the off-stage. In rare moments when I could draw direct connections between the characters on-stage and the young man or woman off-stage, I saw them performing themselves. For me, these became situations where people played people. In fact, they were playing themselves in unobvious ways; this was a revelation for me. Aware of this partial access and of different identities, the group and I were able to find common ground on the basis of which we could engage with one another.

Moremogolo Extension Theatre Trust

Located in Old Debswana Club, in Jwaneng, Moremogolo defines itself as "a grassroots community communication group dealing with issues of language barriers in community awareness. . . ." (from their profile).[11] Relevant to my study is the group's engagement with gender education using cultural art forms of the local community, poverty, HIV/AIDS awareness, and indigenous languages in the performance of art plays.

Most importantly, as a diamond-mining town, Jwaneng provides an implicit backdrop for examinations of the effects of capitalism on women, and on Batswana in general. The situation in Jwaneng was catalyzed by the migrant labor system established in the 1970s following the discovery of copper, nickel and diamonds (in Selibe Phikwe, Jwaneng and Orapa) in Botswana, with more men migrating from rural areas to the mining towns (Barbara Brown). This rural-urban migration facilitated the spread of

[11] Jwaneng is one of the two diamond-mining towns in Botswana. The mine is owned by Debswana, a partnership between De Beers and the government of Botswana. Jwaneng Mine contributes 60-70% of Debswana's total earnings. The economy of the country relies heavily on diamond mining and tourism. The mining town is one of the areas with the highest rates of HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS, identified in this study as one of the threats to the well-being of women in rural areas. It is not surprising that Jwaneng is cited as one of the areas with the highest rates of HIV/AIDS. Men contracted the disease from their new urban places of residence and later transported the disease back to their partners in the villages. As men migrated to the mining towns, some families disintegrated, leaving women to single-handedly fend for their families, thus adding to the plight of women in villages. Therefore, it is important to consider how women in and around Jwaneng experience the migration differently than those in Gaborone, for instance, and if and how this experience gets translated onto the stage.

I arrive one hour earlier than my appointment time of 2 p.m. following multiple telephone conversations with the director of Moremogolo, Mr. Michael Tebogo. Since I am not very familiar with the area, I have asked my younger brother to accompany me. We stop at a Shell gas station where Mr. Tebogo is meant to pick us up. I call him to let him know I have arrived, and I give him the description of my car. About twenty minutes later, he pulls up next to us in quite a decent black car. I never pay much attention to car makes intentionally, as I refuse to identify people with what they drive, so I usually just go by color. Two men come out of the car, one dressed in a black suit and the other in a pair of jeans, a tucked-in shirt and a baseball cap. I look at them as they come towards my car, trying without success to guess which one is Mr. Tebogo. So I wait for the introductions. The man in a suit introduces himself as Mr. Tebogo, and continues to introduce the other one as Mr. Tsietsonyana. Taking the cue from him, I introduce myself as Mma. Mmila (my maiden name) and introduce my brother in the same manner. I

notice that he curtsies as he extends his hand to shake my brother's hand.[12] By the way he shifts his gaze repeatedly between at my brother and me, I can tell he assumes that my brother is my husband. Even though Mr. Tsietsonyana is closer to me, he goes around our car towards my brother, taking off his baseball cap, and then curtsies as he extends his hand to shake my brother's. He then turns to shake mine, bowing his head instead of his knee. My suspicion is confirmed by Mr. Tebogo's statement to me, "You can follow us with *rre*." *Rre* in Setswana refers to father, a man or one's husband.[13]

This scene exemplifies the type of gendered verbal and embodied encounters that I experienced with many of my male research participants; these experiences took place in various sites and are rooted in the gendered Setswana culture. The dominant position of the man in the Setswana social structure is evident here, captured in the curtsying gestures, and in the greeting of the supposed husband *before* the woman. Culturally, when addressing or greeting a group of men and women, you say, "*dumelang borra le bomma*/good morning gentlemen and ladies," contrary to the Western protocol. In many instances my identity as a married woman influenced how connections are forged between me and single and married men. Depending on the marital status of whomever I interacted with, this particular aspect of my identity could negatively or positively affect our relationship and, subsequently, how closely I am let in or I let them in. Based on my experiential knowledge as a Motswana woman growing up in Botswana, and as a result

[12] In Setswana curtsying is usually done by young children to the elders when either greeting or serving them with food, and by wives to their husbands when serving them food to express respect. So it is a gesture reserved for the aged and men. Taking off one's hat is also a gesture of respect captured in the Setswana saying "*ke go rolela hutshe"* (I take off my hat to you).

[13] The fact that *rre* is used to refer to both one's father and husband complies with the patriarchal belief that a wife is a child to her husband. Traditionally in Setswana, a man is never asked, "how is your wife and children?" Rather, he is asked, "how are the children?" meaning both the children and his wife. So the "rre" in Mr. Tebogo's statement suggests his conclusion that my brother is my husband, obviously too young to be my father.

of my interactions with men as a young and single woman, and now as a married young woman, I am always take extra care with my verbal and embodied encounters. Usually an unmarried man would be exceedingly nice (in most cases to a single woman) in a way that makes you feel he expects something in return, whereas a married man might keep his distance when talking to an unmarried woman. Based on this knowledge, I noticed a lot of awkwardness in my first encounter with the two unmarried men, to a large extent because of the presence of my brother (whom they assume is my husband) as well as the ring on my finger. For instance, in my prior telephone conversations with Mr. Tebogo, our exchanges were light-hearted and professional at the same time. What is observed here is a very formal embodied encounter based on our genders and marital statuses, and it is the formality that punctuates the rest of our relations throughout the research process. Therefore, in this moment, my insider position as a Motswana with a deep affiliation with the language and cultural codes of my research participants is what governs our interactions and how we each perform our genders. These cultural codes of conduct also provide the context necessary for understanding the power relations between men and women in theatre companies and how these relations allow or prevent women from communicating their concerns.

After a ten-minute drive, we arrive at the Old Debswana Club where the Moremogolo offices are housed. Mr. Tebogo invites my brother to come in, but my brother politely tells him that he would rather sit in the car and take a nap. The three of us proceed to the office. Before we get to the door, I notice a thatched pavilion on my left. I later learn that this is the group's rehearsal place. When we approach the office, I am

introduced to the administrative staff before being led to one of the three offices: the meeting room on the far left.

It is in this room that Mr. Tebogo, still standing, officially introduces and hands me over to Mr. Tsietsonyana, the Arts Officer, and wishes us a good "meeting," assuring me that I will be in good hands before leaving the room and closing the door behind him. With a warm and polite smile, the soft-spoken Tsietsonyana extends his hand with the words "*Ee mma*/yes madam," offering me a seat at the shorter end of the L-shaped table arrangement at the corner of the room. He then joins me on my left, and we stay seated side by side.

With a file in front of him, he begins to tell me that he has already been briefed about my interest in working with Moremogolo and observing its work, to which I repeatedly nod in gratitude. He nonetheless gives me a chance to articulate my research interest: studying the position and role of women in Moremogolo and observing the theatre-making process so as to examine relationship dynamics among theatre members. I do not get to provide details as he gently interjects—probably because the director had already given him this information—and proceeds to give me an overview of the theatre company, from the administration to membership structure. Through what seems like a monologue, I am told that Moremogolo is made up of fourteen out-of-school youth comprising nine females and four males. I learn that the company prides itself in the use of five indigenous languages, namely, Sengologa, Setswana, Sesarwa, Afrikaans and Seherero, to overcome language barriers in Jwaneng as well as the fifteen non-Setswana-speaking neighboring villages of Ngwaketse West Constituency and Kgalagadi district. These villages are divided into three language-based categories. The first group consists

of the Afrikaans-speaking villages of Middle-pits, Khuis, Werda, Bray and Kokotsha. The second category comprises the Sengologa-speaking villages of Mabutsane, Sekoma, Khakhea, Keng and Morwamusu. The last group (to which the mining town belongs) is made of the Setswana-speaking villages of Pitseng, Tsonyane, Mokhomma, Sese and Maokane.

This primary concern with language provides some insight into what constitutes, in part, the practice of popular theatre in Botswana: its use of the language of communities as an attempt at facilitating participation with the aim of increasing the peoples' capacity to speak out and hopefully change the structures that oppress them. This importance of language in popular theatre is supported by one of my research participants, Bathusi Lesolobe of Ngwao Motheo Theatre Group, who states, "When the common methods of development communication—government officials' long speeches and information materials written in the foreign English language—became boring, theatre practitioners (using Setswana, the national language) came to the rescue of the nation" (e-mail interview, February 2010). I contend that by using indigenous languages, Moremogolo not only contextualizes popular theatre within these specific communities, it also recognizes and engages the varied ethnic identities in a postcolonial Botswana, yielding some specificity of the local community that is often masked by the sole use of the national language.

This language issue is a common concern in African postcolonial discourse, particularly in the debate on the role of the African artist. This debate has a long history in Africa (following the emergence of African writing in European languages) that goes as far back as the 1959 Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists held in Rome. The

debate is ongoing. Some African writers believe that African literature/art is always "anxiogenic"; that the potential for writers and artists to transform the public discourse depends not only on their ideological pronouncements or persuasions but more on the accessibility and reception of their works. Furthermore, it is argued that the task of the African writer and artist is to address issues that inspire the need to change the conditions of the masses.[14] I argue that by priding itself in the use of the indigenous languages in addition to Setswana language, Moremogolo supports Ngugi's view that language (verbal and embodied) is a means of communication and a carrier of culture. As culture, language is the collective memory bank of a people's experience and history. It becomes a product and reflection of this history. Thus a specific culture is transmitted through language in its particularity as the language of a specific (not universal) community with a specific history. By using language to break barriers of communication, Moremogolo is acknowledging the varied cultural and historical identities that mark these different ethnic groups. Ngugi's contention that writing in foreign languages is paying homage to the colonizer—a colonization of the mind—is shared by a guest of honor at one of the *Reteng* performances: the acting Vice President Honorable Dr. Ponatshego Kedikilwe. In his speech and response to the performance, Kedikilwe emphasized the need to guard against the "poisonous virus" of mental and psychic colonialism and neo-colonialism, whereby

[14] Chinua Achebe (1994) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) in "The African Writer and the English Language" and *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* respectively, as renowned African writers and post-colonial scholars, both agree on this task but hold different opinions regarding the language of this 'change' that needs to occur. Ngugi believes that African writers should use African languages to express their African experience, which cannot be expressed in foreign languages that are too stamped with the indelible mark of the colonizer to represent the colonized. Achebe counters this contention, arguing that English could still effectively and successfully carry African experiences.

the Tswana-speaking and indigenous groups tend to look at themselves through the eyes of the dominant cultures.[15]

Additionally, if community participation and ownership lie at the center of popular theatre as understood in Botswana and Africa in general, then its ability to "bring community together, facilitate participation, build community spirit, raise issues, spark discussion and inspire community effort" (Kidd 271) in a way that will challenge the community to reflect and do something, relies in part on this understanding of language as a means of communication and cultural identity. Ideally, for communities to feel "ownership" of the performances, the plays have to be performed by local people, using local languages and addressing local issues identified by communities (Kerr 22).

Back in the office, as we sit adjacent to each other, in addition to the polite monologue-type conversation punctuated with a lot of "*ee mma*" (yes madam), I am struck by Mr. Tsietsonyana's intimate relationship with the file in front of him. In a shy manner, he seems to avoid eye contact with me as he hovers over the file, with his upper body leaning over it protectively, repeatedly placing his arms around the file. I am reminded of my primary school days during exams when the intelligent pupils would hover over and literally cover their work with hands even as they wrote, guarding against the prying eyes of their struggling neighbors.[16] I also cannot help but remember one of the stories my grandmother used to tell us, the story of "Hen and Hawk."[17]

[15] This was at The Reteng Cultural Exhibition held in Gaborone in March 26, 2011. Reteng: The Multicultural Coalition of Botswana is an organization aiming to promote and preserve minority, marginalized, indigenous ethnic groups in Botswana towards promoting cultural diversity, multilingualism, social justice and unity in Botswana.

[16] Often, the less intelligent pupils would strategically place themselves next to the intelligent ones with the intention of plagiarizing their work.

[17] This is one of the folktales that try to account for the origin of things; in this case, why every time a hawk hovers, the hen extends her wings over her chicken in protection, in the same manner that Mr. Tsietsonyana does with his arms around the file.

Blank Theatre: Failed Encounters

Related to the hovering gesture is my failure to connect with another theatre company, which I will call Blank Theatre Company. Even though I was not allowed to work with the theatre company, their indirect refusal to work with me speaks volumes about the power relations between the researcher and the research participants; in this case, it illustrates how I am positioned by my research participants. After learning of Blank's involvement with gender issues, my enthusiastic attempt to set up an appointment with its male director was met with an equally enthusiastic response: an agreement to meet the following day at a restaurant at the Main Mall in Gaborone.

Indeed we meet as planned and exchange introductions, during which we realize that we have common friends and associates in the field of theatre. As we continue with the introductions, I tell him about my work at the University of Botswana and my interest in his theatre company, and describe the reasons why I wish to work with it. He goes on to give me an overview of the company: that they use theatre to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS, educate communities on gender issues, and offer life skills training to children and teenagers in schools. He is very quick to mention their achievements; I get the sense that he measures the company's success by the number of awards it has won. My assumption proves to be accurate: as he describes the awards, he proudly smiles, reaches for his pocket file, and hands me the certificates to substantiate his claims. Even though I have some questions about his or the company's ideas of what constitutes success, I reserve my comments lest I risk spoiling the promising rapport between us. However, I manage to sneak in a question about the involvement of women, specifically, to what extent women in his theatre company use theatre to tell their stories and

communicate their concerns as a way of advancing their well-being. He carefully explains, "We use the storytelling technique and usually give the major roles to the women. As part of the play-making process, we let the actors do research on the communities' problems, then add their own experiences as youth, as women." Our conversation is brought to a sudden end as our waitress brings the bill for our food. I see the director reaching for his pocket, but I quickly but gently offer to pay as an expression of my gratitude for his time. Even though he politely thanks me, I sense a bit of discomfort as he hesitantly puts his wallet back into his pocket. Realizing that I might have broken the Setswana cultural code, possibly threatening the patriarchal normalcy according to which a man (*not* a woman) is the provider, I reassure him that I do not mean to disrespect him in any way.[18] I am relieved when he jokingly adds, "Times have changed my sister, and times are hard" (referring to the changing situation and position of certain women in today's society and the current global economic crisis respectively) to which I lightly add, "Besides, what are research funds for?" He laughs and nods repeatedly in agreement. Satisfied with this initial positive atmosphere, I feel encouraged and relieved when he reassures me that there is no problem with me working with his group for the purpose of this research.

However, much to my surprise, the initial promising connections do not come to fruition as my countless attempts to meet the group as we had agreed are met by equally countless excuses ranging from "Oh, I have an emergency so I cannot meet you today,"

[18] By extension, a woman is not expected to pay for a man as captured in the Setswana saying, "*Ga di nke di etelelwa ke manamagadi pele*/females never lead." I assert that this cultural belief is tied to the long history of women (especially those in rural areas) and poverty—a threat to their well-being. This history is evidenced by an observation made by the Women's Affairs Department's 2003 *National Gender Programme*: "Women are the most affected by poverty in Botswana. . . . A higher proportion of female headed households, compared to male headed households, are living in poverty" (6).

to “I’m sorry, but you cannot meet the group today because they are out doing research for the next play.” On one of the days we were supposed to meet, I arrive at their office ten minutes before the agreed time, 10 o’clock. I find myself still waiting for the director and/or the group at 10:10. I then decide to call him just to confirm the appointment and I am once again told, “Oh, sorry, I had to rush somewhere and unfortunately the group hasn’t prepared anything for you, they will just be rehearsing. So maybe we can reschedule. . . .” I then politely respond, “Oh that is fine. They actually don’t need to prepare anything for me, I will just observe and participate in whatever they are doing,” to which he hesitantly agrees. Staring into space, I slowly hang up.

Rooted in one spot under a shade tree, I am disappointed in myself and semi-paralyzed with the realization that I had just failed at negotiating a relationship with the director. I begin to reflect on what might have contributed to this failure. However, my thought process is interrupted by a chorus of “*dumela mma*/good morning madam” from a group of young boys and girls who join me under the tree. As more arrive, I begin to realize that they are members of Blank Theatre Group, judging by their conversations as well as by the hand props many of them hold. Fortunately for me, one boy recognizes me from a recent performance at a local theatre, Maitisong. As we begin to talk about the performance, others randomly chip in to share their opinions. The young boy in particular is very forthcoming with a lot of information: his dream to make it big in the field and to ultimately go to South Africa where there are more opportunities for artists. His passion for theatre and his determination to “succeed” are written all over his face when he talks about how he comes alive on stage, how he is thankful for theatre for keeping him off the streets. Taking advantage of the ambience, I casually ask how their research is coming

along. With a puzzled look on his face, he asks, “What research?” before voluntarily taking me through their play-making process, which involves no research by actors, contrary to what the director told me. It is from such casual conversations with the energetic young boy that a lot of my questions regarding the failed connections between the director and me are indirectly answered.

In keeping with participatory ethics of consensual research, I decide to stop pursuing my interest in working with the group lest I offend the director. I also once again take comfort in Sultana’s assertion that the research participants play an equally important role in determining the direction of the research process.

This failure to connect with my potential research participant sheds light on the processes involved in negotiating the power relations in the researcher/research participant binary. The director’s indirect refusal to participate in the research demonstrates the often-ignored exercising of power by research participants in the field. I further argue that both Blank’s director’s refusal and Moremogolo’s Tsietsonyana’s hovering gesture constitute what James Scott terms the hidden transcript of the subordinate in the powerful/subordinate power relations (5). Even though neither verbally states that he does not want me to have full access to his documents (in Tsietsonyana’s case) and no access at all to the theatre group (in Blank’s case), the embodied gestures speak volumes. As Scott aptly argues, this often-overlooked non-verbal aspect of the hidden transcript is vital (14). Thus, these gestures can be read as the research participant’s resistance to the power-laden research process, which Spivak (quoted above) argues is always colonial. Thus the research field because a site of constant negotiations between the varied identities of researcher and the participants. These

encounters highlight my "multiplex subjectivity," whereby I am "othered" by my research participants as they reinsert themselves into the research process.

Furthermore, what these embodied gestures reveal is the central role of money (which will be further discussed in Chapter Four) in sustaining popular theatre in Botswana. In one of my post-lunch meeting telephone correspondences with Blank's director, he directly asks me, "Mma Mmila, since you are also working with YOHO theatre group, how can I trust that you will not reveal our approaches and themes to them?" While this might on the one hand suggest a lack of trust in my position as an outsider to the group, the hidden transcript is that I pose a threat to their chances of winning one of the upcoming presidential awards.[19] From my encounters with these theatre companies (both the failed and successful collaborations), I argue that this competition for funding accounts for the skepticism and mistrust among theatre artists. Logically, because of my work with some of these theater companies, sometimes I find myself implicated in these types of tensions as evidenced above.

Storytelling Pre-Performance Encounters

Through my former schoolmate and friend, film director of Abi Films, Moabi Mogorosi, I am introduced to one example of the many non-academic intellectuals found in the many homes of Batswana. Early in the morning on Sunday, May 1, 2011, Moabi and I get into his pickup truck and head to the lands of Kanye west, in the southern

[19] These are the annual President's Day Arts and Performance Competitions held during the first week of July. The award comes with a prize of P25, 000 ($3500.00+/-). Interestingly, I was asked to adjudicate in the 2011 competitions in my capacity and position as a theatre lecturer. However, I had to turn down the request because of my current position as a researcher in the theatre groups taking part in the competition, a position that requires a great level of impartiality.

district of the country, where his widowed mother is temporarily living because it is harvest season.[20]

After driving for about two hours on the tarred road that joins the capital city and Kanye village, we branch off into the dirt road. Moabi jokingly says to me, "Brace yourself for the horseback ride." The road gets bumpy as we drive through some shrub bushes and I finally understand why he laughed at me when I suggested that we ride in my compact car.

We finally arrive at the compound of Mrs. Kenole Mogorosi, a tall woman. As soon as she sees the truck approaching the gate, she comes towards the gate and tries to open it to us, but Moabi beats her to it with the caring and respectful words, "*Ao mama*, you cannot open the gate for us," to which she adoringly smiles and walks back towards the small hut. Moabi leads me to the small compound made of dead tree branches demarcating the fireplace, and I immediately notice, by way of a small-legged pot next to the smoldering fire, that MmaMogorosi has already had her breakfast. As we approach the compound, she comes towards us to welcome us and offers us some traditional wooden benches.

After we are seated, Moabi introduces us and adds, "Mama, this is the storytelling lecturer friend of mine I told you about. . . . Sorry I didn't tell you we were coming today." After this introduction, he leaves us to take out the food supplies he had brought his mother—a normal practice in Setswana for working children to financially support their parents. In addition, as the eldest of three boys, Moabi takes on the role of his

[20] Traditionally, Batswana have three homes: the village, the cattle-post and the lands. The village is the basic home, and the cattle-post being where cattle are kept and men would occasionally go to tender the cattle. The lands is where women plant maize, sorghum grains, maize, beans, watermelons and later return during the harvesting period such as this time.

deceased father as the main provider. Still, MmaMogorosi repeatedly thanks her son for his thoughtfulness. The close relationship between the two is not hard to see, as I notice how she refers to Moabi as "papa," an endearment term usually used on small baby boys.

While Moabi is busy with household chores, MmaMogorosi brings me a bowl of sorghum soft porridge, a gesture of hospitality often extended to guests as captured in the Setswana saying "*moeng goroga dijo di bonale*/guest arrive so we can see food." She then goes back to the fireplace compound to bring herself a cup of Five Roses tea, a South African product. She laughs as she explains that she is actually on her third cup since she woke up. As we sit face-to-face, she tells me about her life in the lands,[21] how she wakes up as early as 04:00 to go to the lands to take out beans from the pods.[22] She tells me she is at peace here. As we delve deeper and deeper into personal conversations about her personal life, I am once more reminded of the relevance of bell hooks' theorizations of the importance of the home in the Setswana culture. This significance is captured in the Setswana saying "*lolwapa lo thata ka mosadi*," which literally translates to "the strength of the home lies in that of a woman," alluding to the fundamental role of a woman in the home in Setswana. It is the woman's primary responsibility to create the home as a safe place by providing care and nurturing to those in her home; home is a place where everyone is affirmed and restored in the midst of outside hardships and

[21] Traditionally, Batswana have three homes: the village, the cattle-post and the lands. The village is the basic home, and the cattle-post is where cattle are kept and men would occasionally go to tend to the cattle. The lands are a more seasonal space where women grow crops such as maize, sorghum, beans, sweet reed and watermelons and where they later return to during the harvesting period such as this time. Thus, the cattle-post and the lands were to a large extent gendered spaces though there have been changes following the encroachment of modernity.

[22] The beans are usually harvested when both the pods and beans are visibly dry. Separating beans from the pods involves the following process: still in their jackets, the beans are put in a sack, then the sack is tightly tied before repeated but gentle (without crushing the beans) pounding on the sack with a rod. The harvesting is typically done by women with the help of children.

deprivations. Thus, as a woman's domain, the home acts as a place of healing and recovery from all kinds of oppression.

Equating the homeplace with the black woman across the globe, drawing on her own experience, hooks writes:

> In our young minds houses belonged to women, were their special domain, not as property, but as places where all that truly mattered in life took place—the warmth and comfort of shelter, the feeding of bodies, the nurturing of souls. There we learned dignity, integrity of being; there we learned to have faith. The folks who made this life possible, who were our primary guides and teachers, were black women. (41-2)

In Setswana, and particularly in Mma Mogorosi's case, this teaching was imparted through *mainane*. In addition to storytelling, she also tells me that because she had gone as far as grade 4, she used to read letters for her fellow villagers who were illiterate, especially letters to wives from their men in the mines in South Africa. The South African mines and the Five Roses tea, just like the Jwaneng mining town, provide an index of colonialism and capitalism mediated through industrial production between South Africa and Botswana, which goes as far back as the migrant labor system in the mid-nineteenth century. Economically neglected by their British colonizer, a significant proportion of Batswana men left their families and migrated to work at the South African diamond and gold mining industries so as to pay taxes which, according to Barbara Brown, a scholar in African Studies who stayed in Botswana from 1976-1978, "kept the colonial establishment going in Botswana and fattened the pockets of the British stockholders" (258). This border-crossing of goods and labor not only allowed the

circulation of commodities such as Five Roses but also that of HIV/AIDS, which continues to intersect with poverty to relegate women to marginalization, threatening their well-being.

As the study reveals, women (especially grandmothers) as caregivers in the home feel the burden of the pandemic as they care for their sick and dying adult children and for their grandchildren orphaned by the pandemic. They are responsible for the economic, social, and psychological well-being of their children and grandchildren.

During our conversations, she excuses herself to go and collect firewood, not too far away from the house, with the words, "feel at home my child." I offer to come with her and together we disappear into the nearby bushes. Indeed I feel at home here, as I am reminded of my childhood when we used to help my great-grandmother with this very chore. Very often we would get temped to ask her to tell us stories to which she always objected, warning us that if we dared to tell stories during the day we would get lost.

Still in the bush, I find myself laughing out loud when she takes me through the journey of her love for stories, recalling watching the movie "Coming to America," the storyline still very vivid in her memory. She then shares her love for Oprah Winfrey, particularly a show that resonates with her own belief that procrastination is a disease. In her words, "These television stories derive from our traditional stories, because the whites are educated, they polish them up for television . . . but whether these stories are in Setswana or English, they still teach us something. Inasmuch as I like to tell stories, I also like to read and share the little knowledge I get with my illiterate younger sisters."

What MmaMogorosi demonstrates here in this rural setting is the need for the invocation of storytelling as a possible meeting place between orature and the written

tradition in a postcolonial Botswana, as suggested by Diana Taylor's concepts of the "archive "and the "repertoire" as complementing each other. In my view, the transition to a new kind of postcolonial world does not mean abandoning the old, or the repository of the old. Rather, it means bringing the old to meet the new, hybridization, as I believe that the past gives meaning to the present as much as the present reconstitutes the nature of the past. As Mma Mogorosi further attests, "I tell these stories to Moabi who in turn writes them down and turns them into film so that they continue to educate those children in cities. You will also do the same thing and educate your white friends in America there."

When we finally return to the house, she thanks me for helping her with the firewood, jokingly adding, "If you were not already married, I would really love to have you as my daughter-in-law," winking and tilting her head at Moabi. She leans forward towards me and whispers in my ear, "When is he finding a wife?" and we both burst out in laughter. She then disappears into the house to later come out with a tray with three bowls of bean soup. MmaMogorosi's additional gesture of hospitality totally humbles me, and I feel bad that she as an elder is serving me. But at the same time, I cannot turn down this hospitality lest I appear rude or snobbish.

Of all my field encounters, I felt most comfortable here in Mma Mogorosi's compound, where I was met with the easiest and most genuine acceptance. My insider position is sincerely felt here despite the inherent hierarchies, which I negotiated by simple acts, such as eating the food offered to me (it turned out to be food that I sincerely enjoy), helping with the collection of firewood, and most importantly showing genuine

interest in what she had to say. This initial encounter is the beginning of many more to come.

The storytelling encounters, particularly the private encounters such as those I had with Mma Mogorosi, serve as part of the aforementioned off-stage sites for women's hidden transcripts. I argue that through the stories that Mma Mogorosi and the other storytellers choose to tell, they are engaging in what Scott calls "a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors" (19), thus broadening and putting forward self-determined individual and collective definitions of their well-being as well as what threatens it.

Conclusion

Importantly, my relationships with my research participants in these various sites reveal that for popular theatre to constitute a theatrical counter-public, allowing women to own and tell their narratives towards advancing their well-being, it requires a power-balanced relationship between men and women in theatre companies. The different strategies that women adopt to communicate their concerns largely depend on their audience, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. Thus it is important to talk about my position and relationships with my research participants because the knowledge created is to a large extent based on these encounters (both successful and failed), and on how my research participants positioned me in various contexts.

CHAPTER TWO

The Status of Popular Theatre and Women in Botswana

It is the evening of May 19, 2007, in my home village Lejwana, located in the southern part of Botswana, about twenty miles from the South African border. In my quest to listen to and relate Setswana folktales as part of my research for a conference, I have decided to visit my paternal uncle's wife Mmakhotho, one of the most gifted storytellers in the village. In her 70s, she is the only surviving grandmother in the family (nuclear and extended). I have brought my six-year-old daughter, Tiiso to give her the more communal experience of hearing the stories in the presence of other children. Experiencing storytelling with her peers expands her socialization (as a Motswana child) in so far as the storytelling event allows intra-audience interactions in addition to performer-audience exchange.

By 7pm all of the children have taken their spaces around the fire. We sit facing MmaKhotho in a semi-circle. I feel awkward sitting among younger children and I notice some of them staring at me, probably wondering what the grown-up university teacher is doing. My position in this moment is uncomfortably shifting to "outsider."

I cannot help but notice that there are fewer children here (about ten) compared to when I was growing up. I am reminded of Susheela Curtis's (1975) study of Tswana Tales, which suggests that the grandmothers in the villages are losing their vital audiences since "children attend school and young men and women go away to work in cities" (viii). The diminished number of children audiences is an example

of the consequences of the introduction of formal schools in the late 19th century: it shifted the locus of knowledge-sharing from such practices as storytelling to the more Western institution of the school. This cultural invasion undermined the crucial social roles played by women storytellers. In the same breath it can be argued that the continued performances bear evidence of storytelling's ability to adapt to changes in a post-colonial Botswana, such as the rural-urban migration, which led to the disintegration of kinship bonds, reciprocal obligations, unity and family life and structure.

The children and I are suddenly pleasantly startled out of our thoughts and private chats by MmaKhotho's call, "Banyana! Banyana!" ("Boys and girls! Boys and girls!"), to which we unanimously optimistically respond, "Mmmaaaa!"

After drawing our attention to her, MmaKhotho turns to take out a tea cup placed upside-down on a saucer on a cupboard behind her–a way of setting up suspense. She builds suspense by slowly pouring herself some Five Roses tea from the teapot. After adding two teaspoons of sugar, she stirs repeatedly before she takes out the teaspoon. She then takes a long sip with a blowing sound, peeking over the cup to once again arrest our attention. She carefully replaces her cup on the saucer, before opening the story with "Gatwe e rile…" (It is said that…). Understanding the significance of this opening formula—a verbal contract between the narrator and the audience—we prepare ourselves for the performance. As she puts down both the saucer and the cup, she now directly looks into our eyes, from left to right and back, taking advantage of the equal sight-lines provided by the semi-circle arrangement. She pauses, and it is in this moment that the suspense ruptures as we impatiently cry, "Please go

on grandma!" Even though I do not join the children in the begging cry, I no longer feel my age as I get lost in the story's ambiance. In my opinion, it is in part this ability to successfully arouse and arrest her audience's attention that makes MmaKhotho an outstanding storyteller. Pleased that she has elicited a satisfactory response from us, she smiles and embarks on the narrative of "Hare, Hippopotamus and Elephant." In a sitting position, using only her upper body, grandma takes us through the various episodes of the story right up to the climax when little mmutle (hare) has handed both ends of the rope to the two big animals without their knowledge. Taking on the role of mmutle, in a squeaky voice, grandma bursts out laughing as she folds her hands on her chest and leans back against an imaginary tree. Without a word, she looks at her audience and pauses as some children join in the laughter while others shake their tiny hands in curiosity and ask, "What did hippo and elephant do next? Who won? Did they kill mmutle?

At this point, grandma looks at the children's curious eyes, clearly enjoying the suspense she is creating by taking her audience in and out of the story world. She once again digresses, taking out a small yellow and green container of 'Ntsu' snuff from underneath her bra. We watch as she taps some snuff on the palm of her hand, puts the container back into her bra and then starts gathering the snuff to the center of her palm. She inhales a portion of the snuff with one nostril, closes her eyes, and then drops her head down. After a little while, with the other nostril, she sniffs up the remaining half of the snuff and drops her head ones again as she begins to sneeze. The little children giggle at this sight. My daughter nudges me and whispers into my ear, "Is grandma taking drugs?" I can't help but laugh as I shake my head from side to side and tell her "No!" (hoping that no one has heard her, lest her "city

character" embarrassingly becomes conspicuous). Not so satisfied with my answer, she whispers into one of my little cousins' ear who also begins to laugh. As grandma finally lifts up her face, she takes out a handkerchief from her bra and begins to wipe her nose. Then she looks at us, as one of the younger children impatiently asks, "And what did mmutle do next grandma? Did the rope break?" Satisfied with the level of curiosity she has aroused, grandma clears her throat and turns the question to them, "What do you think she did?" After two guesses by those who had clearly never heard the story, MmaKhotho takes us to the last episode of the tale before ending it with the closing formula, "la bo le fela" (that's the end of the story).

Before proceeding to the next story, grandma directly looks into the children and asks, "So what did you learn?" One of the younger boys raises his hand (something he must have learnt from formal schooling) before shouting, "That mmutle is clever!" The discussion is closed with grandma's statement, "You see, you don't have to be big to win! Even you (pointing at the youngest audience member) can win against him (pointing at one of the older children) as long as you use this! (Repeatedly tapping her temple)!"

African Theatre: Before Popular Theatre

Just as the storytelling performance indicates, literature on African theatre and performance suggests that African communities have a long history of using cultural forms of theatre as a communication medium to convey messages for various functions, clearly positing indigenous African theatre performance as contradicting the "art for the sake of art" paradigm (Christopher Kamlongera 1989; Zakes Mda 1993; Micere Mugo 1999; David Kerr 1996; Thulaganyo Mogobe 1999; Penina Mlama 1994 among others). Mugo writes that these performances are:

> more than artistic expressions, they are carriers of history, reflectors of the positive and negative forces inherent in the evolution of society. They are as well vehicles of conscientization that shape people's vision, even as they explore avenues for resolving the conflicts that characterize human development. Theatre was therefore used for entertainment as well as artistic commentary and critique of social reality (201).

Summarizing this view on the functional relevance of these performances to communities, Kamlongera writes, "It was the function of our [African] traditional theatre, not merely to entertain, but also to instruct" (439). It is important to point out that while this didacticism was generally meant to benefit communities, it could be manipulated by the dominant members of society (such as rulers, men and the aged) to foster conformism and further marginalize the already marginalized community members.

In Botswana, traditional theatre has included storytelling *(mainane*); the *dikgafela* (the celebration of the new harvest); *bojale* and *bogwera* (female and male initiation ceremonies, respectively); and trance healing rituals. As Mogobe reminds us, although some of these could be performed anytime when circumstances allowed, most of them were performed on special occasions (42).

Given this long history of the communicative function of African and Setswana theatre and performance, it is therefore not surprising to see that contemporary theatrical practices such as popular theatre continue to re-appropriate and use these forms to serve communities in their changing socio-political contexts.

Storytelling: Democratic Pedagogy

I invoke the storytelling performance to establish it as one of the traditional performance forms with outstanding pedagogical elements; as a performance form that centers women (especially rural ones) as cultural producers, knowledge producers and

transmitters; and lastly, as a medium that establishes the audience as co-producer in democratic knowledge production in postcolonial Botswana. These elements, particularly the last one, parallel the 21st century Brazilian emancipatory educationist and community activist Paulo Freire's idea of a problem-posing education that centers students in the education process: both as subjects and as critical thinkers (68).

This democratic education is evidenced first in the sitting position of both MmaKhotho and that of the audience. Just as in Freire's theory of education as the practice of freedom, this positioning of bodies unsettles the vertical hierarchies of power commonly found in a modern classroom setting. With MmaKhotho sitting face-to-face with her younger audience, the unequal power relation between teller (knower) and listener (passive receiver) is minimized by the equal sightlines between MmaKhotho and her audience. Furthermore, the sitting arrangement facilitates one integral part of the storytelling performance: the face-to-face communication that is consistent with the Setswana expression, "*mafoko a matlhong*" (words are in the eyes), which places greater importance on embodied communication than verbal. Thus, both the performer and the audience can take cues from each other's gestures. For instance, MmaKhotho relies on reading our eyes to know if she has or has not elicited enough suspense before moving from one episode to the next. In this sense, the audience becomes her necessary resource material, an integral part of the communication process, a dialogic exchange.

Diana Taylor highlights this central role of the audience, in her theorization of performance as a repertoire as she writes, "it requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there', being a part of the

transmission" (20). As evidenced by both the embodied and verbal exchanges in the story, the audience evolves beyond just "being there" as they become collaborators.

While the audience is established as an essential component of this performance form, I argue that the performer plays an important role in establishing the performance as an interactive mode of communication. That is, even though the performer can potentially be the most central element, she chooses to not relegate her audience to the periphery. As MmaKhotho dramatizes symbols of oppression and tyranny through the use of large animals (such as hippo and elephant) in the narrative above, she directly encourages her audience to question the hegemonic systems of power against the subordinate, here depicted as the intelligent little hare. She does this by first posing questions to encourage critical thinking before performing a gesture that highlights its importance (i.e., the repeated tapping of her temple). It is in this interactive moment, especially during the post-performance discussion, that storytelling functions as an alternative empowering medium of historical transmission of knowledge: a democratic pedagogy.

Therefore, as a way of historicizing popular theatre in Botswana in this chapter, I proffer that while popular theatre was adopted largely to achieve this democratic element in knowledge production, it was already a defining element of storytelling in pre-colonial Botswana. In this way, the story and its executor provide the necessary background and context within which popular theatre was adopted in post-colonial Botswana. This leads me to ask the following questions: Who controls theatre? What is the connection between traditional performance forms and popular theatre? How does popular theatre, as a theatre of dominated communities, involve women (the dominated gender) in the confrontation

of issues that entrench them in subordination? I argue that even though popular theatre, as practiced by some theatre groups, theoretically and in practice aspires to re-appropriate this important element (democratic pedagogy/audience involvement), it nevertheless relegates women like MmaKhotho and MmaMogorosi (in Chapter One) to the peripheries. As this Chapter will show, I critique this relegation by *Laedza Batanani* practitioners in the selection of male-biased themes and in the use of traditional undemocratic spaces for supposedly "democratic performances" in the first popular theatre projects.

Historicizing Popular Theatre in Africa and Botswana

Since the late 1970s, popular theatre has gained grounds in Africa, its practitioners aiming to encourage human and community development through bottom-up participatory approaches. African theatre scholars have observed that popular theatre is a context-based term that, in Botswana (as in many other African countries), is usually referred to by many names (Mogobe, 1999; Kamlongera, 1988; Jacques, 2003). These labels include: community theatre/drama, theatre for social mobilization, theatre for development and social drama. Despite the fact that there are inevitable connotations associated with each label, what they generally have in common is the needs and concerns of the societies of which they are a part, with special consideration for the poor, the disadvantaged and the oppressed. In writing about orphans, HIV and popular theatre in Botswana, Jacques (2003) states that popular theatre "addresses issues of social significance in a manner that impacts the audience and involves them in its discourse and solution seeking" (28). According to Mlama (1999) popular theatre is a process of theatre creation emerging from the community's active involvement in identifying problems, analyzing and communicating them with the view to solving them (56). In a similar vein,

Mogobe (1999) notes that popular theatre is a means of communication that makes use of local languages and idioms to transmit messages and themes that communities can identify with and respond to. Emphasizing the ideal central position of communities in this medium, from which the term 'popular' is derived, Zakes Mda (1993) writes that popular theatre is "aimed at the whole community […it] involves *local* people as performers, uses *local* languages […] and deals with *local* problems and situations with which everyone can identify with" [my emphasis] (46). Ideally, popular theatre in its various forms has the potential to be an effective medium of communication and community mobilization. According to Vuyisile Otukile, the director of YOHO, this fundamental role of popular theatre can be achieved if it is taken beyond the mere utilization of cultural artistic forms, so that it also creates meaningful messages for and with communities. Insofar as it is an agent of change, it must not only reflect and interpret society but also transform it. Popular theatre scholars and practitioners, such as the Canadian Ross Kidd (1984), believe that because it is intelligible to communities, this medium "could help bring the community together, facilitate participation, build community spirit, raise issues, spark discussion, challenge apathy, and inspire community effort. It could reflect the community to itself in a way that challenged the community to do something" (271). Thus, perspectives on popular theatre place emphasis on community participation as a crucial means for eliciting community self-improvement.

In the context of assessing the level of community participation, Kidd's classification of the strands of popular theatre defines a similar approach, termed 'Mass education and Rural Extension', as a tool that teaches basic concepts of health and sanitation, and that also mobilizes communities on agricultural production and other development struggles

(269). He adds that this mode of theatre is essentially "top-down or one-way communication," wherein messages are worked out beforehand by experts rather than emanating from the communities. Mwansa and Bergman's conceptualization of 'theatre *with* the people' implies change agents inviting a select group of people to participate in the process. Artists work jointly with the select group from the beginning to the end. Together, they present the play to the community and facilitate discussions. Finally, 'theatre *by* the people' refers to outside experts training and including in the process a select group of artists drawn from the community. In this approach the communities are the organizers, actors and disseminators of information. They identify and analyze problems, make and perform plays and conduct discussions under the guidance of animators. The concepts of theatre *with* the people and theatre *by* the people capture what scholars like Kidd and Mda contend to be participatory theatre.

This participatory communication is derived from Freire's belief that communities, no matter how marginalized or oppressed, have the potential to analyze problems of issues themselves, and to find suitable solutions for them. In other words, innovative ideas did not have to come from outside, but could be generated by people in local communities making a dialogue with each other. If any external facilitator was involved in the communication his/her job was to think *with* rather than *for* the community (Kerr 11).

These ideas were adapted to theatre by Boal through his concept of 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. His work was devoted to finding participatory techniques for theatre, which would allow audiences to participate actively in performances and/or discussions about the plays, thereby taking control of their own transformation process. This process is

what Freire calls ‘conscientisation’, whereby communities actively engage in dialogue through which they identify their problems, reflect on why those problems exist, and then take action to solve those problems. Freire emphasizes the importance of community participation through dialogue, “ without dialogue there is no communication and without communication there can be no true education” (65). Like Boal, many adult educators such and theatre scholars and practitioners translated Freire’s ideas of raising critical awareness into theatre. In particular, they experimented with how theatre can be used by the disadvantaged members of society to identify and connect their problems to a particular social order (Mda 10).

Although African experimentation with popular theatre is derived from Freire’s and Boal’s theorizations of education and theatre (that actually parallels that of Setswana storytelling as discussed above), popular theatre inherited such pedagogic elements of storytelling. Mlama describes the genesis of popular theatre in Africa as a response to development approaches that neglected culture as an integral component of the development process in Africa, which she argues overemphasized economic growth at the expense of the socio-cultural factors (Zenenga 115). Therefore, according to Mlama, popular theatre becomes a theatre of the dominated communities, which is used to fight various oppressive structures. While I agree with Mlama on the importance of striking a balance between all factors (cultural, social, economic, political) that contribute to the well-being of communities, I argue that popular theatre has not been that balancing medium in Botswana. As I demonstrate in Chapter Four, largely operating within the state’s national program, Vision 2016, it has become a government’s mouthpiece while parading as a theatre of the dominated communities. In this Chapter I point to the

elements of undemocratic communication evident in the first popular projects; elements that undermine the very goal of popular theatre.

In Botswana, the first popular theatre project can be traced to *Laedza Batanani* (Community Awakening) in 1974 in North East Botswana (Bokalaka area). This initiative was made up of adult educators, extension workers, university students and village leaders who saw the ability of popular theatre "to reach subaltern audiences thus overcoming the barriers of illiteracy through its use of local language and locally accepted cultural values and artistic forms, and its innate attraction because of performance's entertainment value" (Kerr 151). [23]

The *Laedza Batanani* project attracted interest among different sectors in the country and in the continent. It inspired similar experiments in countries like Cameroon, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia (Kidd 1984, Mugo 1999), with varying degrees of success. Locally, interest grew from adult educators, government ministries and extension workers, leading to the formation of the Popular Theatre Committee in 1976, meant to encourage the development of popular theatre activities in Botswana. This committee had representatives from "certain District Administrations, the Ministries most concerned with extension work, and various adult education agencies" (Mackenzie 3). The University of Botswana, then the Institute of Adult Education, oversaw the committee with the first major activity being the National Popular Theatre Workshop held in 1978. Meanwhile, popular theatre campaigns mushroomed in the country, including the 1976 *Bosele Tshwaraganang* (a Setswana

[23] The phrase '*Laedza Batanani'* is Ikalanga (Sekalaka in Setswana), one of the historically marginalized and endangered languages of Botswana. Ikalanga is indisputably the second (to Setswana, the national language) mostly spoken language nationwide. The Bakalanga (Ikalanga ethnic group) are densely populated in north eastern Botswana and remain one of the country's largest non-Tswana speaking ethnic group.

translation of *Laedza Batanani*) campaign by the Kgatleng District Extension Team in Mochudi village in the Kgatleng district.[24] Like the *Laedza Batanani,* the aim of this campaign was to educate people through entertainment by presenting local problems in a popular form and organizing community discussion of the problems. The general structure of these annual campaigns began with a community planning workshop during which village and participating organizations' leaders—such as chiefs, headmen, village development community chairpersons and extension workers—discussed and prioritized community problems (Kidd 271). According to the *Bosele Tshwaraganang Report* (BTR) the identified themes included the debate between the use of traditional or modern medicine, the need to plough early, condom use, sex education to children and venereal diseases. These were then followed by dramatic presentations of the most pressing themes from which potential actors were identified and invited into the next level: the actors' workshop.

The actors' workshop comprised extension workers, teachers and community leaders. It is here where community concerns were further prioritized according to how important they were to communities, their relevance to the time of year, their susceptibility to change, as well as whether they are specific or not (BTR, 1976). Thereafter, the dramatic presentations were refined into a more polished play, spiced up by a blend of songs, dance and puppets. The play was then performed at the *kgotla* (the village meeting place), after which the actors led post-performance discussions with the hope of encouraging communities to act on the presented problems. This was achieved by dividing the audiences into small discussion groups, then each group would give its report to the

[24] Mochudi village is in the Kgatleng district, a home to Bakgatla ethnic group: one of the eight dominant Setswana speaking ethnic groups.

larger group and the audience as a whole would begin to deliberate on possible action(s) (Mda 14).

Subsequent to the workshop was the follow-up action. This mostly consisted of the 'haves' assisting the 'have-nots', and the various government departments involved providing material solutions to identified problems. For instance, if it was agreed that children and youth should be educated about sex and condom use, such as in the *Bosele Tshwaraganang* campaign, then the health workers took on this responsibility of educating and distributing condoms (BTR, 1976).

The *Laedza Batanani* and *Bosele Tshwaraganang* projects developed into a strong community theatre based in the rural areas aimed at "educating others on issues of importance" (Mogobe 45) and specific to each community. However, *Laedza Batanani* began to wane in the early 80s as the impetus was slowly lost and ultimately died. But it seeds were later re-cultivated in the mid-1980s by groups such as Reetsanang (Listen to One Another) and Magosi Dedicated Artists, which emphasized community development and raising awareness on topical issues (Mogobe 45). Reetsanang, an association of community drama groups, was established in 1986 with the goal of promoting and developing theatre in the country as a tool for community mobilization and education on diverse developmental issues. By 2003, it had seventy-seven group members, of which only about twenty percent were active. Reetsanang and its associates attracted not only young people but adults as well, probably because of the educational value attached to this type of theatre. Additionally, the groups attracted financial support from the government, NGOs and donor agencies, as evidenced by the grant Reetsanang received in 2000 from the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation (Jacques 29).

Currently there are several popular theatre groups in Botswana, including Ghetto Artists based in Francistown, Mama Theatre based in Ramotswa village, YOHO and Moremogolo. In the midst of other social and health issues, HIV/AIDS remains a common theme addressed by most of these theatre companies.

Popular Theatre and HIV

Since the first clinical evidence of AIDS was reported in 1981, more than 22 million people have died of the disease (UNAIDS, 2001). Africa continues to dwarf the rest of the world in terms of how it has been affected by the epidemic. In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 23 million adults and children are living with HIV or AIDS (*AIDS in Africa*, 2002). Botswana has been hard-hit by AIDS, ranking second in the world in terms of infection rates (Swaziland has the highest rates). It is estimated that about 300,000 people in Botswana—a significant proportion of its population of 1.7 million individuals—are living with HIV (UNAIDS, 2010). The disease accounts for more than half of the deaths in the country. In an effort to curb the scourge, the government of Botswana continues to spend millions of Pulas[25], making AIDS not just a social hazard but an economic one as well. For instance, according to the UNAIDS 2010 report on the global AIDS epidemic, approximately $340 million was spent on Botswana's HIV/AIDS response in 2008. As a way forward, Botswana's long term vision (as cited in the Vision 2016 national program) is to have no new infections by the year 2016 when the nation celebrates 50 years of independence. Both the government and the people of Botswana, either independently or in collaboration have engaged in multiple HIV/AIDS prevention activities including public education and awareness through the arts.

[25] *Pula* (P) is the Botswana currency.

As theatre takes cues from communities and their situational and political conditions, it is not surprising that I observed the HIV/AIDS pandemic to be a common theme in popular theatre groups such as YOHO and Moremogolo; indeed, it has been an important theme in popular theatre since the last decade of the twentieth century following the outbreak of the scourge that ravaged and dehumanized the country. On the part of the popular theatre practitioners, the engagement with HIV/AIDS is a demonstration of Ngugi wa Thiongo's (1988) contention that in the face of economic, political or sociocultural calamities, the artist has no choice (contrary to Mugo's argument) "but to align himself [/herself] with the people and articulate their deepest yearnings and struggles for change, real change" (123) for his/her own freedom lies in that of his/her communities.[26] This resonates with the African philosophy of *botho*[27] or the "art of being a human being" (Bhengu 10). *Botho* is an African worldview based on the primary values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in the spirit of family. In Setswana, a person who has *botho* is well mannered, courteous, has a well-rounded character and realizes his/her full potential both as an individual and as part of the community (Government of Botswana, 1997).

In Setswana, this concept of *botho* is captured by the proverb "*motho ke motho ka batho*" (a person is a person because of other people). The notion extends to governance,

[26] Drawing from Brecht's essay, "The Popular and the Realistic", Mugo notes that in the face of African calamities of economic oppression, political repression and socio-cultural degradation, the African theatre artist is faced with a moral choice: whether or not to continue with paradigms of bourgeois theatre which degrade the masses (207-8).

[27] The word for this concept varies from one culture and language to another. For instance the Nguni Languages such as Ndebele (spoken in Zimbabwe and South Africa), Zulu and Xhosa (spoken in South Africa) use "*ubuntu*"; the Shona in Zimbabwe use "*hunu*"; the Chewa in Malawi use "*umunthu*"; Swahili uses "*utu"* whereas the Sotho and Tswana in Lesotho, Botswana and South Africa use "*botho*". Here I use the Setswana version of the concept, "*botho".*

defining the relationship that should exist between the leader and the people they serve as further suggested by the proverb "*kgosi ke kgosi ka batho*" (a chief is a chief through the people or because of the people). This means that leaders exist only because of the people and their primary duty is to serve the people. Likewise, African artists are obliged to love, serve, and fight to be fully human. To be a human being is to be a person who not only relates to, but also loves and serves, other people. This worldview parallels Freire's (1982) notion of "love for the world and for men" (62). Similarly, Freire's worldview also encompasses passion, love, humility, trust, kindness, courage, liberation, and a deep commitment to society and transformation.

Freire's and Boal's theories have influenced theatre to address HIV/AIDS in Africa, and I argue that it is this communal responsibility, captured in the spirit of *botho*, which drives the popular theatre artist in Botswana to use this medium as a theatrical counter-public in the discourse of the epidemic. Despite these well-intended actions, I argue that when operating in collaboration with the state, popular theatre does not fulfill its function as imagined by its practitioners such as Zenenga: a theatre of the oppressed. Rather, I maintain that it becomes a government's tool: a theatre of domestication. I refer to a theatre of domestication as any theatre paradigm that intentionally or unintentionally operates in direct contrast to the democratic communication and dialogue discussed above. In this way, communities (as Freire's students) are treated as objects and not as active subjects, as co-creators in the communication process – subsequently becoming passive recipients of such theatre practitioners' messages: top-down communication.

Therefore, the HIV/AIDS pandemic shapes, in part, the practice of popular theatre in Botswana. Accordingly, throughout this dissertation, as I analyze performances on

HIV/AIDS, I am attentive to the state's interpretation of the disease versus how the affected—especially poor women—interpret it. Does the narrative create a space for self-defined/collective interpretations of these and other health issues? I claim that since the first popular theatre project in Botswana, popular theatre has yet to fulfill its goal of community involvement through democratic (bottom-up) communication processes.

Reflections on Participation in Laedza Batanani

Here I make the argument that while popular theatre, through community participation, has the potential to operate as a tool for marginalized members of society (thereby allowing them to address their concerns and challenge dominant structures of power), the very concept of "community participation" can be problematic when it leaves the communities concerned out of the decision-making process, hence perpetuating dominant discourses at the expense of the minority's. Kidd alludes to this paradox as he views popular theatre as a dual-edged entity that has the potential to liberate and domesticate at the same time, depending on its operators' agenda. What follows, then, is a discussion of the paradox of participation, with reference to the aforementioned *Laedza Batanani* project.

While the operators of *Laedza Batanani* wished to use the initiative to increase participation of village dwellers, deepen their critical awareness, and mobilize community members for community action towards their own development (Mda 14), misinterpretation of the concept of "participation" and/or "community" in part accounts for the waning of the project. In their assessment of the project, Kidd and Byram and Mda aptly observe that villagers' participation was limited: although they were involved in post-performance discussions, they had no say in the selection of themes or how they

were to be presented for discussion. As shown above, participants of the workshop stage (where performance themes were selected) consisted of government workers and community leaders: elite members of society. The selection and presentation of themes therefore reflected their views as the dominant group. Automatically, by excluding the communities from the decision-making process, these external dominant views went unchallenged, demonstrating what Markus Missen terms a 'mode of inclusion', whereby decisions are made by others (14). This creates a situation where the rural communities are not in control and are mere mouthpieces of the ideas produced by others, mystifying "their reality and conditioning them to accept a passive, dependent, uncritical role in an equitable social structure" (Kidd and Byram 12).

Additionally, absent from the available literature on *Laedza Batanani* are the positionalities of the project founders: white male adult educators (e.g., Ross Kidd, Martin Byram and Frank Youngman). As outsiders on many levels, they spoke neither Setswana nor Ikalanga, which means that there was an undeniable language barrier between these authors and the Kalanga communities. I therefore wonder how this language barrier might have contributed to the exclusion of most community members. It is possible that those involved in the identification of community concerns were those who could speak English, meaning that the illiterate groups were left out. Interestingly, the outsiders with their external performance form use their power to turn local communities into outsiders in the project, thereby displacing the local.

In addition to the externalization of the local by the outsiders, there is the uncritical consideration of the *kgotla*[28] as a traditional public space. Further, while some scholars

[28] The kgotla is a public meeting space where traditionally only adult males were allowed to publicly air their views and debate on matters concerning the community.

commended the founders for using the *kgotla* as a traditional public meeting place (e.g., Byam, 1999), I challenge the democratic access of the *kgotla* as a performance space for a project geared toward community participation through democratic communication. The fundamental question is: who had access to this space? As discussed in Chapter One, until independence in 1966, the *kgotla* was a gendered and classed space where women, youth and marginalized ethnic groups were excluded from deliberations. They were only included in other public traditional performances such as harvest celebrations. Even though these groups are now allowed in the *kgotla*, men still dominate in numbers and in participation. Arguably, since the project was launched just a decade after independence, women still did not enjoy the same level of access and participation as men, in the same way that patriarchal inequalities continue to relegate women to subordination today. This possibly resulted in their minimal participation in the project. According to the Bosele Tshwaraganang Report (BTR) report, one of the issues discussed was condom use. I struggle to imagine a woman and/or young person freely discussing condom use and, by extension, sex, in such a space.

> *Here I would like to digress and offer my personal experience so as to substantiate my argument. It is 1994. I am a twenty year old AIDS educator, working for Population Services International (PSI) in Gaborone.*[29] *It is in the morning and my team and I have just set up a wooden stage by a parking lot next to the Shoprite shopping complex near a taxi rank. As always, there is a lot of movement: people coming in and out of the shops, some changing taxis. From a distance taxi drivers*

[29] PSI is a condom social marketing program (co-sponsored by USAID and the Botswana government at the time. It mainly focused on women and youth health education and AIDS education in general. At the time, it distributed the Lovers Plus condom at a subsidized price of 50thebe (0.006cents) per pack of three.

can be heard calling customers, "Route 1! Route 4! A reye*!* A reye mama*! (Let's go! Let's go, miss!). Other people wander around aimlessly.*

The four of us are wearing jeans and white Lovers Plus t-shirts. In order to draw the crowd we begin to play some music and hold what we called "jam sessions." Indeed, people begin to gather and my teammate Freddie gets on the stage and facilitates a dance competition: he selects four people to dance and the crowd picks a winner. The winner gets a t-shirt, while the remaining three get packs of condoms. As soon as we have gathered a decent crowd, I go on stage with a wooden penis in one hand, and a condom in the other hand.

Because the audience is a mixture of adult men and women as well as young boys and girls, I carefully select a language that is not offensive to the adults.[30] *I slowly begin my condom education lesson, using the wooden penis and the condom as my demonstration tools. As I explain the danger of unprotected sex in the midst of the escalating infection rates, as expected, different people are responding differently: young boys are carefree, often laughing; some young girls are looking at me passively, some attentively. The adult women are the most difficult to read. Some are very attentive, but in others I can sense discomfort, which some mask with nervous smiles. I feel very good about my demonstration when I notice a middle-aged man watching attentively with no expression on his face. At the end of the demonstration I typically invite questions and comments. After answering about three questions, the middle-aged man asks me, "Whose child are you?" Puzzled, I hesitate before opening my mouth to answer. But before I utter the first word, angrily interjects, "Who are*

[30] We usually varied the language depending on our audience.

you to talk to me about sex? What do you know about sex? Where is the wooden vagina?"

Two decades after *Laedza Batanani*, about eight years after the first reported AIDS case, in a fairly free-access public space, I am reprimanded for talking about sex. This resistance to engage in a dialogue with me first stems from cultural understandings of sex as a taboo and sensitive subject, which is why it is important to choose one's language carefully. Secondly, it emanates from culturally-assigned unequal terrains of power. As an older man, this audience member is doubly dominant: generationally and gender-wise as evidenced by his questions, "whose *child* are you?" and "who are you?" The "who" here connotes a belittling of both age and gender. The middle-aged man feels emasculated not only by the AIDS scourge, but also, perhaps with the question "where is the wooden vagina?" he is aptly posing a crucial and controversial question in Botswana: are sex and safe sex solely the terrain of men? This issue is actually an on-going debate in Botswana: whether or not women should share the responsibility of initiating, negotiating and/or enforcing safe sex by carrying condoms with them.

The debate came up in one of our YOHO off-stage discussions where one girl openly shared how she was brutalized by her boyfriend after finding a condom in her purse: accusing her of promiscuity.

This anecdote supports my argument that it is very unlikely that all women and youth would feel comfortable discussing condom use in this place and time. It is important to point out that talking about condoms and sex became unavoidable after the first reported cases of AIDS in 1986.

In view of this critique, this approach qualifies *Laedza Batanani* as a message dissemination project and not as a stimulus for a communication process, which is the opposite of what the operators set out to achieve. *Laedza Batanani* therefore fails as a participatory project and instead becomes, in David Mosse's (2001) words, "a legitimizing strategy that serves to represent external interest as local needs, dominant interests as community concerns…" (22). It goes without saying that when this happens, this superficial identification of community concerns yields equally superficial solutions to problems; solutions that blame the victim. Most importantly with this critique, I want to underscore that recent observations indicate that meaningful "community participation"—understood as the initial goal of endogenous approaches, with the aim of yielding a theatre of the dominated communities—is still limited. In this way, I maintain that this reality redefines popular theatre as "a perpetual struggle towards community participation."

One other misreading is that of "community", whereby practitioners are unable to consider the multiple identities of communities that translate to different needs and concerns of poor men, women, youth and children in different geographical sites. For instance, one of the themes selected for performances was "cattle theft". Elite male members of societies, such as chiefs and other leaders who own cattle, are most likely to encounter this particular problem.[31] Interestingly, the poor members (usually men) of the society are the ones that engage in cattle theft because of poverty and also to assert their manhood. By critiquing the poor for stealing cattle without examining the cultural and economic factors, the project assumes a classless and undifferentiated community

[31] Culturally, cattle in Setswana are a symbol of wealth. They are a property of men, and a crucial element of what it means to be a man. A man's worth was determined by the number of cattle he owned.

whereby upper class interests are presented as the interests of all classes. Not considered are important questions such as: how might cultural understandings of masculinity drive men to live up to certain notions of what it means to be a man (in this case to own cattle and provide for their families)? How do the pressures of poverty and these concepts of masculinity come to override concerns regarding the risks involved in stealing? What are the perspectives of the thieving poor? In the absence such considerations, generalizations result in a victim-blaming phenomenon that shifts the attention away from what the dominant classes could be doing, to what the poor villagers are doing to contribute to their own calamities. This in turn yields superficial solutions to a community's concerns.

Additionally, failure on the part of the practitioners to locate and analyze the roots of cattle theft within larger political, cultural and economic structures denotes false understandings of "community" as a sense of common interest and unity of purpose. This approach demonstrates France Cleaver's (1999) claim that the tendency in participatory approaches is often to understand the "community" as a natural, desirable social entity (603). In order words, this reading of "community" blankets the existence of markers of difference and multiple identities such as gender and class. Hence, it is imperative to take these relations into account when engaging in community participation, and to pay attention to "internal differences in values and perceptions" within communities, rendering communities as "unstable" (Kuftinec 68-9). For instance, as insinuated above, I contend that cattle theft is both a classed and gendered theme and should be presented as such.

This claim is supported by my discussion with an active theatre practitioner, Bathusi Lesolobe, who comes from Mochudi village. In discussing the importance of choosing

themes as the first step towards community involvement and ownership, he references his participation in a performance on cattle theft in his home village, Mochudi. He recalls how women did not participate in the post-performance discussion, not even the one woman he knew to be outspoken. After the performance, he decided to approach this woman. Emphatically, the woman asked him, "What did you want me to say? Do I have a cow?" Sarcastically, the woman further noted, "I thought it was a performance for those who have cattle."[32] In a sense, the women's silence, which could have easily been read as docility, was actually a powerful marginal discourse of the excluded: a discourse punctuated with silences. As Scott notes, this is one of the ways through which the powerless "critique power by hiding behind innocuous understanding of their conduct" (xiii).

This is a choice (by this woman, and others) to be silent; a silence that Nnaemeka theorizes as being different from imposed silence (4). I therefore argue that while those with the power to choose themes unconsciously or consciously exclude women with their choice, the women transform the exclusion (with the potential of silencing) into a choice to be silent. This refusal to speak constitutes agency and resistance. The silence is broken and accessed by the women and Lesolobe in off-stage sites. Hence, there is a need to include the meaning created in off-stage performances, as I propose in the next chapter.

A Closer Look at "Community Participation"

The concept of participation in popular theatre is located in participatory development discourses in the social sciences. According to Frances Cleaver (1999), conceptions of participation in participatory development approaches often revolve around the means/end dichotomy, whilst "participation in itself is considered by many as

[32] This is because cattle ownership is gendered: it is in the male sphere.

empowerment, regardless of the actual activity undertaken" (598). Here participation suggests ownership and active involvement of all involved in the project. Referencing Hauschilt and Lybak, Chisiza notes that "participatory approaches to development tend to be formulated as a reaction to the modernization paradigm's focus on top-down diffusion of Western knowledge and practices into the Third World" (25-26). It is in view of such modernizing approaches that Mlama, as I argue above, saw popular theatre as a counter-paradigm. In as far as popular theatre is not a unified discipline; it is used by different groups for different purposes, demonstrating different levels of participation (Mwansa and Bergman, 2003; Ross Kidd 1984). Some approaches within the discipline of popular theatre fall within these frameworks as techniques used in participatory development: a spark or springboard for community interaction, decision-making, and action (Kidd). Kidd calls this strand of popular theatre, "community or participatory development," which could help "bring the community together, facilitate participation, build community spirit, raise issues, spark discussion, challenge apathy, and inspire community effort. It could reflect the community to itself in a way that challenged the community to do something" (271).

In *Participation: The New Tyranny?*, Cooke and Kothari challenge the claim of participatory approaches. Defining tyranny as "the illegitimate and/or unjust exercise of power" (4), they identify three forms of tyranny: the tyranny of decision-making and control, the tyranny of the group, and the tyranny of method (7-8). Cooke and Kothari contend that participatory projects fail to challenge top-down power relations; instead, power and decision-making remain with the implementing agency. Similarly, David Mosse argues that instead of empowering people, participatory approaches tend to be a

legitimizing strategy that "serve[s] to represent external interest *as* local needs, dominant interests *as* community concerns" (22). In a situation closer to home, this applies to *Laedza Batanani* and can in part account for its demise. In this dissertation, I will examine the socio-economic and political constraints under which popular theatre operates in Botswana, in particular how government funding can lead to the domestication and silencing implied by Mosse. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, "self-censorship" can be observed in some YOHO and Moremogolo performances as a result of desire for/maintaining government funding.

Another criticism (discussed above in the context of *Laedza Batanani*) raised against participatory development revolves around the practitioners' failure to take into account the inequalities within communities, thereby reinforcing existing power relations that produce homogenous "local" viewpoints where none previously existed. This privileges certain voices whilst suppressing others, and is insufficiently sensitive to the forms of knowledge that different voices produce (Cleaver 44; Kothari 140). This constitutes what Cooke and Kothari term 'the tyranny of the group', wherein communities are seen as being unitary and absent of inequality, conflict and social, political and economic differences. This simplistic reading of "community" masks biases and perspectives that might be based on age, class, ethnicity, religion and gender. Hence my interest in examining how the emerging themes of HIV/AIDS and domestic violence (for example) are presented on- and off-stage. From whose perspectives are these themes told, and to what extent are they reflective of poor women's situations?

Mda argues that when community participation is reduced to decisions made by the dominant groups, as in the *Laedza Batanani* project, then the desired critical awareness will not come to fruition. Interestingly, this appeasement is observed in current practices: some popular theatre companies' inclusion of communities is limited to the use of their traditional artistic forms, as opposed to their actual concerns. This sidelining of oppressed communities' concerns only perpetuates hegemonic discourses over communities'.

Holding the Hegemony Accountable: Meaningful Participation

In order to assess the efficacy and benefit of popular theatre, the function of participation in popular theatre—in theory and in practice—must be examined. Christopher Kamlongera, emphasizes community participation as integral to popular theatre as he describes an example of that as this "opening up the play"—a technique involving asking the audience direct questions at critical points of the play's storyline and incorporating their responses into the plot) serves as catalyst for community mobilization for solution-finding and problem-solving (447).

An example of this technique is observed in some performances in Botswana, such as Mama Theatre's play on socially excluded ethnic groups.[33] In this particular performance, Mama Theatre uses the "Stop and Start" theatre technique with "cut-off" points at different moments of the play as way of involving the audience in the discussion. For instance, the play taps into the commonalities that exist between the ethnic groups of Botswana, such as *"go laa"* (imparting parental wisdom as a way of

[33] This was at the Reteng Cultural Exhibition held in Gaborone on March 26, 2011. The play is about a young girl, Ndawana, who is abused and bullied by her schoolmates because she belongs to one of the minority ethnic groups in Botswana, Batswapong. They call her a *Le*tswapong (instead of *Mo*tswapong), which is a derogatory label.

guiding a child). This concept of "*go laa*" as it relates to children is rooted in the African philosophy, "it takes a village to raise a child." In the play this happens just before Ndawana leaves home for boarding school. The director, as the facilitator, then stops the play and allows the audience to assume the role of the parents and of the village in preparing the young girl for the challenges of life yet to come and advising her on how she should conduct herself. The enactment of the "*go laa*" is achieved by inviting different audience members to give words of wisdom to the young girl. This "cut-off" approach is later used in moments of conflict such as when Ndawana is being bullied and begins to see herself through the eyes of her oppressors—a good-for-nothing *Letswapong*—demonstrating a "psychological subjugation" (Ngugi 437). In moments such as these, the facilitator involves the audience in the dialogue by inviting them to intervene. I contend that, in doing so the director, again taps into the spirit of communality common in most African societies by creating a space for the audience to partake in this process of "*go tshereganya*" (intervention) as they in "*go laa*," thereby emphasizing the most fundamental aspect of the Setswana culture that cuts across ethnic boundaries.

I argue that this constitutes meaningful audience participation, especially since the facilitator consciously strives to involve different members, from the ordinary men and women to those in power such as the guests of honor (the acting Vice President, Hon. Dr. Ponatshego Kedikilwe; a Member of Parliament, Mr. Gilson Saleshando; and the University of Botswana Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof. Lydia Saleshando). In doing so, the facilitator generates a somewhat equal representation of the audience participation, inasmuch as it is possible within the parameters of the on-stage performance. Of

particular interest to me is the manner in which he involved those in power. For instance, in addition to asking each guest of honor to guide Ndawana and intervene when she is being bullied, he specifically asks each how he/she could use his/her position of power to change the broader issue: the social marginalization of certain ethnic groups in Botswana. The viewing audience members become witnesses to each other's public commitments to change the situation, especially to those of the honored guests. Thus, as Tim Prenkti notes, the use of popular theatre goes beyond simply being a catalyst for raising consciousness about community needs; it also becomes a way of generating the confidence and sense of purpose and control that increases the likelihood of subsequent action being effective and sustained (120).

Another aspect of participation as function concerns project implementation. I have observed that most of the popular theatre projects tend to subject communities to the rhetoric of being saved from the claws of diseases, poverty and gender inequalities, among other issues. The eradication of such challenges is, of course, imperative for better communities and societies. However, while it might be true that communities are ravaged by (for example) HIV/AIDS, the theatre companies with their financial supporters tend to fall short in addressing the issue from the perspective of the relevant communities. For instance, while there is an undeniable link between alcohol abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS, when performances depict alcohol abuse as the sole cause of AIDS, in my view this is a case of superficial identification of concerns yielding superficial solutions and implementations that only blame the victims.

Just like the critics of participatory development, I argue that implementations need to be initiated by communities in collaboration with governments and others providing

support. Thus, when we consider that policy decisions (such as the imposed alcohol levy) are made by officials far removed from the concerned communities and participation is relegated to the level of implementation, the function of participation is reduced to the rhetoric of "community participation equals aid and protection from the government and/or donors." To this end, it would seem that when participation is compromised, popular theatre as a participatory communication methodology fits into this paradoxical rhetoric of participatory development, especially as it functions as part of the government national program. Thus, such popular theatre interventions serve only to perpetuate the official narratives (such as the government-identified causes of HIV/AIDS) that may not necessarily reconcile with the concerns of communities. Hence, I argue that as long as popular theatre projects adopt approaches that limit community participation in addressing their problems from their perspectives, the intended goal of giving marginalized people the tools for problem identification, solution-finding and a space wherein change can be facilitated will remain a challenge. Therefore, the paradoxes of participation in popular theatre concern the lack of participation as a transformative power whereby the power to make decisions that affect community projects remains in the hands of the state, as I discuss in Chapter Four. Unless communities are permitted to challenge structures that aim to subject them to top-down communications, popular theatre fails to articulate marginalized groups' concerns: it remains a fallacy.

I therefore join Kidd and Byram (1981) in calling for the reassessment of popular theatre. I contend that reassessing the efficacy of popular theatre as a tool for community mobilization for marginalized members of society (such as rural women like Mma Khotho) requires a consideration of the history of popular theatre in Botswana.

Invasive Encounter: Setswana traditional theatre and popular theatre

Popular theatre is a fusion of modern and traditional theatre forms. As a way of moving forward, I proffer that the inability of popular theatre to achieve its goal of community involvement may have originated in the first encounter between the two forms. As discussed above, prior to Botswana's contact with Europeans, Batswana had their own systems of education embedded in practices such as storytelling. With the introduction of formal schools in the late 19th century, the locus of knowledge shifted to the agents of Western values and the school. The new system ushered in the era of "cultural invasion," which, "through its emphasis on assimilation and expropriation, asserted [the European] culture to [Batswana] people it sought to conquer" (Davies, 7). This system undermined the Setswana indigenous systems of education, which alienated Batswana from their culture. This encounter demonstrates what Freire refers to as "cultural invasion", whereby the invaders inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression, the invaders become the molding authors, and those they invade become objects as they are expected to follow the invader's choice (150). These moments of encounter are clearly clouded by negative perceptions of the 'other'. It is this lack of dialogic exchange between the European colonizers and the Batswana that creates dualistic and hierarchical thinking used to repress other ways of knowledge. With this in mind, I argue that the reality of popular theatre, as it is practiced in Africa generally and Botswana specifically, calls for modifications derived from the specific contexts of the intended audience communities: self-defined paradigms that permit the participation of

grassroots communities, such as women storytellers, to use media with which they are already familiar.

To bring this closer to home, let us return to the inauguration of popular theatre in Botswana and the address given by Hon. Morake at a Popular Theatre workshop in Molepoloe village in 1978:

> I think you are in for a very busy two weeks […] the camaraderie of working together with others in a team, the satisfaction of receiving tuition and guidance from *people with greater knowledge and experience* [...] (my emphasis) (BTR, 50).

Although this subtle cultural hegemonizing might not have been intentional, given that the minister was trying to advocate the importance of merging modern education (popular theatre in this case) and traditional culture, it nonetheless undermines the traditional knowledge that the local participants might bring, suggesting a colonized mind on the part of the minister. What the address suggests is a top-down flow of information rather than an equal exchange of ideas and information, insinuating that popular theatre is a more superior knowledge system than those of traditional knowledge. This moment of encounter, I argue, laid the foundation for the message-oriented performances of several theatre groups, turning popular theatre into what Mda calls a mere "lip service to community participation" (16); important decisions and planning are left to the public servants, parastatal organizations, university educators and community leaders.

This unequal encounter between popular theatre and traditional pedagogical practices is in part accountable for the exclusion of rural women like Mma Khotho and their modes of expression, such as storytelling.

Social Position of women in Botswana

In light of the aforementioned critiques of participatory approaches and of the tendency to treat communities as homogenous and stable (and, in doing so, overlooking differences of class, gender, and ethnicity, among others), a consideration of the social position of women in Botswana provides the necessary cultural and political context of the position of women in popular theatre. By understanding the position of women, we can also understand why the HIV/AIDS and domestic violence discourses were the emerging themes in the observed performances.

Underpinning the role of women in cultural production is the power relationship that assigns socially-constructed roles. Men and women learn through socialization their roles, duties and rights in social reproduction as well as their limits in the exercise of power. Gender imbalances manifest themselves in men having greater control of resources and assets while women have less rights and privileges. This imbalance has implications not only for the status of women in the Setswana society but also for women's roles and participation in other social activities. For the Motswana woman, this situation is not new. Rather, it has been informed at various stages of history by factors from within and outside the cultural systems; these factors sometimes strengthened and sometimes weakened the status and position of women. It is important to note, however, that Batswana women are not an amorphous mass without differentiation.

Patriarchy is one of the major internal factors within which the marginalization of women is located. Generally, in Africa, patriarchy to a large extent defines who owns the means of production, and who consumes the resources and assets. Historically, land has been a very important economic and cultural issue in Africa, but women's experiences of

with the issue, including land access and its utilization, have depended on the specificities of patriarchal articulation in the historical context of the concerned environment.

In Botswana, specifically, women (especially the nonacademic intellectuals in rural areas) occupy a subordinate position within the traditional patriarchal hierarchy. Under this practice, men have absolute power and control whereas women are generally disadvantaged and have lower status. This traditional social setup is captured by Isaac Schapera's observations of the social structure of the Batswana: "women are on the whole regarded as socially inferior to men, and in Tswana law are always treated as minors" (1955, 28). A more recent observation is made by Mhlauli, Vosburg-Bluem and Merryfield (2010) who state that, traditionally, all property (such as cattle-post and land) "is inherited by close male relatives who then have the right to decide what, if anything, to give his sisters, wife or mother" (60-61).

Although this customary law no longer stands, its legacy continues to "entrench women's subordination to men" (Phaladze & Tlou 27) in post-colonial Botswana. The gendered Setswana tradition is further embedded in proverbs that perpetuate the man's dominant position in relation to his wife and authorize his promiscuity. These include, "*Monna thotse o a nama"* which translates to "A man has to spread just like a pumpkin plant". A woman on the other hand has to conserve herself for her husband and cannot question her partner's whereabouts. Often, if the woman (especially when she is financially dependent on a man) dares to challenge the man's authority by, for example, insisting on condom usage, she can be jilted, physically abused or even killed. This, among other things, is partly accountable for the escalating HIV/AIDS infection rates in Botswana, with women and girls being affected most seriously. In addition to HIV/AIDS,

Botswana has been ravaged by a series of love-related femicides (intimate partner homicides), locally called "passion killings", since 2004. In these instances of gender-based violence, the perpetrators have been men and the victims, women. In most cases when men are told, for instance, that the relationship is over, they resort to violence because they think that their authority has been undermined. Alao Amos (2006) further asserts the implication of patriarchy in these murders;

> It is believed that the patriarchal nature of most African settings, [Botswana included], the ideology of male supremacy have relegated women to a subordinate role. Consequently, respect for women in any relationship with men is lopsided in favor of men and has led to abuse of women, including intimate femicide (311).

Although the mechanisms of oppression have changed following the encroachment of modernity and the amendment of laws, as a differentiated group, many women evidently still experience patriarchy in various forms and to different degrees, and they continue to negotiate their positions within the gendered cultural formations. Therefore, there is a clear need for a study that pursues a feminist agenda and that searches for specific sites (popular theatre on- and off-stage performances) where women's bodies are found, paying attention to what and how they express their concerns and counter oppressive structures. It is this location of poor women that has sparked my interest in how, as a subaltern group, women use popular theatre (especially given its function) to address these issues that threaten their lives. Additionally, it is my desire to examine how the position of women as second-class citizens translates to vulnerability in the context of the AIDS epidemic, as discussed above. How do women use popular

theater as a counter-hegemonic paradigm to issues of AIDS and domestic violence that continue to plague them? According to my observations, the off-stage discourse provides an important arena for women's narratives and points to gender predicaments as the root cause behind the domestic violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Thus, in the next chapter, I examine performances from a gender perspective, paying attention to the role of women in the identification, presentation and resolutions of such themes.

Women, like men, are not endowed with a single identity. But because they belong to many affiliations and owe allegiances to a variety of groupings including those of class, geographic location and ethnicity, their participation in cultural productions is also informed by these different identities. Hence, this study is concerned with out-of-school and unemployed young women in varied locations, as active participants in the social construction of their societies.

Most importantly, I am interested in determining if and how the different theatre approaches accommodate the varied identities of women.

CHAPTER THREE

"What Does Gender Have To Do With It? Connections and Contradictions of On- and Off-Stage Performances"

"…until the lions learn how to write history,
tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter."
Nozipo Maraire (78-79)

As already established, the use of theatre and performance as a strategy for community organization, communication, education and awareness on various social issues has a relatively long history in Botswana. In particular, the utilization of popular theatre by various theatre groups and other stakeholders, such as government departments, multi-sectoral AIDS committees and district health teams, can be traced to *Laedza Batanani* of 1974. In justifying the formation of *Laedza Batanani*, its founders, Kidd and Byram (both white male adult educators), write that the popular theatre project was inspired by their observation that:

> In Botswana as in many other developing countries, rural people often become passive observers of change. Capital development projects rarely require their participation. Educational programmes through the mass media and extension workers are normally conceived as services and information for them rather than as tools by which they can take action for development themselves (20).

Hence, their intention with the project was to propose greater involvement of rural communities as beneficiaries in development projects. While their pioneering efforts were praiseworthy, I wish to point to the project's shortcomings relevant to this chapter: the issue of positionality, which, as I argue in detail in Chapter Two, in part accounts for

the waning of the project. The founders of *Laedza Batanani* were white male adult educators, meaning that they were outsiders on many levels. As I discuss in Chapter Two, this positionality is accompanied by cultural and language barriers that limit meaningful community participation (rural communities were not involved in crucial processes such as selecting themes), in turn yielding a top-down communication whereby the rural communities were not in control and were mere mouthpieces of ideas produced by others. This indicates how the founders fell into the very trap they were trying to correct: turning rural communities into passive observers of projects meant to improve and sustain their lives.

Laedza Batanani did not simply establish the trend of the using and spreading popular theatre in Africa generally, and in Botswana specifically; as I wish to demonstrate in this chapter, it was also a trend-setter in terms of how popular theatre has been and continues to be controlled by men. In this chapter I explore how, in the hands of local men, popular theatre practices often yield representations, embodied practices and rehearsal dynamics infused with hegemonic discourses of both traditional and colonial patriarchal values, assumptions and beliefs that relegate minority identities such as women.

Since the 1970s, popular theatre has been extensively used to engage rural communities in addressing social maladies that trouble them and the nation at large. These include HIV/AIDS, alcohol abuse, gender-based violence and poverty, among many others. The general ideological understandings that guide the practices of popular theatre in Africa are summarized by Penina Mlama, who defines it as "a process of theatre creation emerging from the community's active involvement in identifying

problems, analyzing and communicating them through theatre with the view to solving them" (46). This definition places community participation central to popular theatre. This participatory communication is derived from Freire's theorization that no matter how marginalized or oppressed communities are, they have the potential to analyze problems themselves, and to find suitable solutions for these problems. In other words, innovative ideas do not have to come from outside, but can instead be generated by people in local communities making a dialogue with each other**.**

Operating within the same conceptualizations, in Botswana, popular theatre practitioners such as Bathusi Lesolobe argue that, while other mass educational programs and materials and government speeches are "boring and alienated from their targeted audiences," popular theatre is a much more relevant and meaningful strategy in combating social ills. According to Lesolebe, because the educational materials are often presented in print and/or delivered in English and/or the national language, Setswana, they alienate the illiterate and non-English and/or non-Setswana speakers. Therefore, popular theatre as a communication model ideally fills this gap because of its use of the two-way communication process that challenges top-down communications.

However, I argue that popular theatre in Botswana does not always operate as an equal communication tool for communities largely because it is still run by men who operate within patriarchal values that do not view women as equal to men, contradicting the ideologies of popular theatre. Is equal communication possible within this framework? I observe that, since art often mirrors the characteristics of the society within which it is produced, such patriarchal beliefs and assumptions guide and shape the selection of themes by most of these men, as well as their understandings of selected

themes/problem and communities. These in turn yield narratives, discourses and behaviors entrenched in gendered myths and stereotypes. In some cases, as will be discussed below, the narratives de-gender otherwise gendered social issues. Here, I am interested in whether or not theatrical representations of different social problems are attentive to how communities differ in terms of gender, geographical space, culture, age and class. Additionally, I wish to determine if the narratives reflect when and how these problems interconnect to further marginalize certain communities. As a result of cultural practices embedded within unequal power relations between men and women, some social problems are gendered; this in turn leads to the economic disempowerment of women and to their susceptibility to social ills and diseases such as domestic violence and HIV/AIDS, respectively. Without ignoring other categories, I examine if and how theatrical representations take into consideration the fact that some social problems are gendered. True to the epigraph above, until popular theatre practitioners meaningfully center marginalized groups such as women in their interventions, the on-stage will always perpetuate uncontested, male-dominant and -constructed narratives and discourses.

In this chapter, through a gender analysis of observed on-stage and off-stage performances, I demonstrate how women's concerns and desires do not always make it to the on-stage performances, which are to a large extent controlled by men. As evidenced by the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) documentation, no female theatre group directors have worked with the DAC.[34] Additionally, all the directors I encountered in this research were men. Furthermore, I observed that while some of these male directors

[34] Under the Ministry of Youth, Sports of Culture, the DAC is the government's umbrella body charged with the responsibility of promoting, developing as well as providing administrative and grant support for the arts, including theatre.

are transparent (knowingly or innocently) about their domination in the dramatic scripting process, others, such as Blank Theatre, are intentionally cagey (to me) and dishonest (to their funder), as shown in Chapter One. Such male-centered dramatic scripting is informed by internalized social scripts rooted in patriarchal norms and beliefs that in turn limit women's meaningful participation in on-stage performances. Yet, some of these male-constructed narratives are challenged by women within and outside of the productions.

Without suggesting that male directors are unable to transcend their gender identities in their representations, or that female directors will inherently be attentive to gender issues, I maintain that the fact that no active theatre groups are single-handedly run by women[35] provides fertile ground for such representations. This observation is substantiated by the following response from the DAC's Assistant Culture Officer, Mr. Tshireletso Modikwa: "Currently we do not have a deliberate positive discrimination aimed at women."[36] Evidently, theatre remains controlled by men despite the fact that women make up more than 50% of the world's population. The questions that I seek to explore in this chapter include: Whose stories are told on-stage? From whose perspective(s) are they told? What distance and in what direction do the ripples of the drop of water travel? My observations lead me to argue that because women still occupy subordinate positions of power in all the theatre companies studied herein, their stories do not always make it to the on-stage performances. Thus the themes presented on the

[35] Although I learned from my research participants that Metlhaetsile Women's Centre had a theatre group that focused on women issues such as Gender Based Violence (GBV), at the time of my research the theatre group was not active. Metlhaetsile is a women's/human rights center based in Mochudi village, serving women from and beyond its geographic location. It mainly provides legal aid and education for women, and lobbies for legal reform.

[36] This was in response to my question about the empowerment of Batswana women in and through theatre.

theatrical stage are to a large extent punctuated with traditional and colonial male biases and portrayals of women as victims. Yet I claim that there *is* power enunciated both on-stage and off-stage.

Sadly, funders and theatre companies often judge the success and efficacy of the performances solely on the final on-stage performances. Drawing inspiration from Dwight Conquergood's (1988) assertion that "the critical/political component of popular theatre enacts itself in the process of developing the performance as much as, if not more than, in the final presentation to an audience," (181) I propose that we need to reconsider the less structured off-stage performances because I strongly contend that it is these spaces where women and other marginalized voices are found. This contention is further inspired by James Scott's theorization of resistance and the hidden transcripts of the subordinate. Scott asserts that "we cannot know how contrived or imposed the performance is unless we can speak, as it were to the performer offstage, out of this particular power-laden context [the onstage performance], or unless the performer suddenly declares openly, on stage that the performances we have previously observed were just a pose" (4). Scott's theory is relevant since most of the theatre projects are funded by either the state and/or NGOs, which, as I will discuss in the next chapter, results in the domestication and sidelining of communities' views when theatre practitioners find themselves pushing the agendas of the funders. Therefore, I claim that it is within the marginal off-stage spaces where the discourses of subversion are found, manifested by silences, verbal and embodied gestures and other articulations of counter-discourses.

I use the term "on-stage performances" to refer to theatrical presentations performed by various theatre groups for a public audience. These are generally rehearsed, controlled and structured. Off-stage performances, on the other hand, constitute the less structured verbal and embodied gestures that occur in private one-on-one conversations, workshop discussions as well as casual pre-performance conversations and actions. Thus, the off-stage performances can be private (such as one-on-one talks) or semi-public (such as workshop discussions). Between these two types of performance spaces are the post-performance discussions that usually entail question-and-answer deliberations. The post-performance discussion is one of the main participatory techniques of popular theatre.[37] Although a facilitator mediates these discussions, they nevertheless occupy a space between the on-stage and off-stage performances because the audiences' verbal and non-verbal responses can be spontaneous and less structured. I will discuss the performance spaces simultaneously as they pertain to particular plays. The three plays that I will discuss are: Moremogolo's *Alcohol and Drug Abuse*, and YOHO's *The Flower* and *Don't do that.*

1. Moremogolo's *Alcohol and Drug Abuse*: A Superficial Exploration

It is 08:15 on Friday March 4, 2011, when I arrive at the Jwaneng Community Hall for a performance on alcohol and drug abuse scheduled for 09:00. I join two uniformed women police officers who are standing in front of the hall. As we exchange introductions, I learn that they are among the invited guests representing the Botswana Police Department in Jwaneng. I read the presence of uniformed officers as a visual

[37] In this system, the facilitator usually addresses the audience and poses questions or comments in the hope of sparking a debate or dialogue.

embodiment of the Botswana Police Department's support as partners and beneficiaries of the unpopular Alcohol Levy. In this off-stage space, they are not only performing their roles as enforcers of the alcohol-related laws and penalties, they are also establishing 'order' by regulating unlawful behavior. In addition to curiosity and nervousness, the officers' presence also gives me a feeling of dread about the post-performance discussions and the audience's reactions to the upcoming performance. Interestingly, the police officers remain passive throughout the performance. Despite this passivity, the uniform remains a constant reminder of the officers' roles as law and order enforcers.

A few minutes later, some of the Moremogolo group members arrive: five girls and two boys all dressed in blue jeans and red T-shirts with the words "alcohol and drug abuse" written in black on their backs.[38] Coincidentally I am wearing a red and white t-shirt with blue jeans, so I easily blend in, much to my delight. As mentioned in Chapter One, I have been consciously trying to blend in as part of my efforts to create rapport with my research participants and to diminish visible markers of difference that might create distance between us. Recognizing me, they approach and we end up chatting about the problems they are facing as girls, boys, and unemployed youth in a mining town. The boys are a little quiet, while the girls are more forthcoming (probably because of our common identities as women). The girls raise issues such as how working men take advantage of them—often exerting control in the relationship because they are financially supporting the girl by paying her rent among other things. One of the girls emphatically points out, "Basically the relationship is never over until he says so…even if he cheats on you and you find yourself another boyfriend, every time he meets you he demands sex"

[38] Using t-shirts, coffee mugs, key rings, pens, caps, etc., as promotional materials has become a common practice by many community interventionists. These are mainly used as crowd-pullers and to encourage audience participation in on-stage performances.

(informal discussion). Another girl chips in: "And sometimes he will take you to his house and keep you there the whole weekend, having sex with you…expecting you to clean his house, cook for him and do his laundry. But if you ask him for money, he refuses."[39] Evidently, the economically disempowered girl loses control over everything including her body (which becomes a site of violence) as she is forced into silence, with the continued hope of a more beneficial and fair transaction: eventually finding a more supportive and less abusive boyfriend. Both the girls and their abusive boyfriends seem to be operating within traditional patriarchal beliefs about a gendered division of roles in a marriage: the man as the provider and the woman as the caregiver. However, these are not married couples; therefore, what is evident here, as I will discuss further, is the men's exploitation of this cultural practice.

In this moment, I notice that one of the boys is uncomfortable: he keeps looking up and down with a nervous smile, clearly avoiding eye contact with me. Moments later, probably feeling the pressure to comment on what his female counterparts are saying, he quickly states, "…and these are the same men who take our girlfriends because they have money." While it is possible that he is disassociating himself (and other boys in a similar situation) from the patriarchal violence, it can also be argued that he is seeking solidarity with his female counterparts, suggesting that there are certain issues, such as poverty, that cut across boundaries of gender. This view finds resonance among many African feminists. Despite the different voices within African feminism, this belief is one important aspect that most of them share and it drives the approach of "communality struggle," which recognizes men not necessarily as the enemy but as a group that should be included in many of the social oppressions that both men and women face (Nnaemeka;

[39] My translation.

Arndt; Modupe-Kolawole; Ogundipe-Leslie). Just as this boy seems to be seeking solidarity with the women assembled outside the Jwaneng Community Hall, these African feminists similarly appeal to men's solidarity to challenge the patriarchal system that oppresses women. In their view, the only men who become the enemy are the ones who betray this act of solidarity and pose as a threat to this "emancipatory endeavor". This approach is beautifully captured by Ogundipe-Leslie, who remarks:

> No, men are not the enemy. The enemy is the total societal structure which is a jumble of neo-colonial and feudalistic, even slave-holding structures and social attitudes…As women's liberation is but an aspect of the need to liberate the total society from dehumanization and the loss of fundamental human rights, it is the social system which must change. But men become enemies when they seek to retard, even block, these necessary historical changes for selfish interests in power, when they claim 'culture and heritage' as if human societies are not constructed by human beings, when they plead and laugh about the 'natural and enduring inferiority of women', when they argue that change is impossible because history is static, which it is not. (in Ardnt 73-74)

Thus central to African feminism is this spirit of "complementarity": the need for men and women to collaborate with and complement each other in fighting social, economic, cultural and political discrimination. In the example above, it is evident that the perpetrators (the mineworkers) and their victims (the unemployed boys and girls) are products of the Setswana cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity. In the case of the perpetrators, their understanding of what it means to be a Motswana man authorizes them to seek gratification of their sexual appetites among these young girls, and to use physical power to gain control of the girls' bodies through physical violence (assault and rape) when they refuse to comply. For the boys whose girlfriends are "taken"

(willingly or by force) by these men with financial power, their masculinities are challenged and their egos are bruised as they feel reduced to "lesser" men (in part explaining the boy's discomfort and fidgeting gestures). For the young girls, I argue that the men's conceptions of masculinity impinge on the girls' vulnerability to these men's power over their bodies. The girls' own acceptance of cultural constructions of women as accomplices in the process of their own violation forces them into silence (failure to report them to the police); at least, up until now, in this off-stage performance. [40]

Therefore, while I agree with and support the spirit of "complementarity," I argue that it is important to pay attention to how traditional Setswana conceptions of masculinity and femininity generally, and in specific contexts, intersect to push women further into the periphery. Most importantly, I say that the off-stage yields partial access to what transpires in these peripheral spaces, providing a means of examining how those forced into silence respond to systems of oppression. It is with this in mind that I look forward to the performance about to begin, planning to pay close attention to how these issues are approached and confronted on the on-stage performance by the same bodies.

At about 08:50 we are ushered into the hall by Mr. Ford Tsietsonyana, the Arts Officer, dressed in the red campaign t-shirt and cargo khaki pants. Inside, there is a proscenium set-up: chairs are facing the stage, with about four rows to the left of the stage and five rows to the right, with an aisle in between. Most community halls in Botswana are set up in this manner because of their eclectic usage. I notice that, as per common practice, the "guests of honor" (including the police officers and Ministry of

[40] One of the reasons cited by both girls in YOHO and Moremogolo is that the police officers, who are mostly men, often make fun of them and put the blame on them, failing to treat their issues with the seriousness and confidentiality they deserve. They therefore avoid going to the police officers, in order to save themselves from further humiliation and embarrassment.

Health representatives) are seated in the front, right-hand row. Although I am introduced as one of the "guests of honor", I decide to sit on the left side in the third row, where I can get a clear view of the performance without being conspicuous—yet another conscious attempt to blend in with the ordinary as I distance myself from the authorities lest I distance myself from the youth. However, in order not to offend the authorities, I carefully explain that I want to be able to take photos; hence my decision to sit a little further away from the stage.

Typical of popular theatre performances, the stage is free of set properties. At the back of the stage, a large banner forms the backdrop of the performance with the words "*Twantsho ya Tiriso Botlhaswa ya Bojalwa le go tshwakgoga*". Below the stage, in the space between the front stage and the floor, hangs a similar banner with the English translation: "Campaign Against Alcohol Abuse and Addicts." With the two banners sandwiching the performance throughout, the message is hard to miss as the audience is always reminded of what is expected of it: to stop abusing alcohol. Through this choice of presentation, the visual aids to a large extent take away from the performance because they come across as overly didactic.

The story begins with a brief, violent scene: a drunken husband assaulting his wife. In the next scene, their children, Sebaetseng and her younger sister (who is not named in the play), find a letter from their mother. In the letter their mother tells the crying girls that she has left because of the physical abuse by their alcoholic father, who, in the words of his wife, "loves alcohol more than he loves me." The crying intensifies as the younger sister reads this portion: "Sebaetseng, please take care of your younger sister." The girls' helplessness is clear as they lament over the father's irresponsibility

and alcoholism. The crying immediately turns into apologies and declarations of their love for their father as soon as he staggers in, with a bag on his shoulder, threatening to beat them as he yells: "You little witches, I'll leave you alone here because I realize you are witches just like your mother." Through the use of flashbacks and song, Sebaetseng's younger sister takes us through the journey of their lives after their mother's departure.

In a later scene, Sebaetseng is talking to her cousin over the phone when she accidentally bumps into an oncoming young man dressed in a black shirt and black dress pants and holding a can of Coke, which spills on him. She is quick to apologize but her apologies are met with the seductive words: "*o ska wara nonosi, nna ke bidiwa Toks, wena o mang?"* (Don't worry baby, my name is Toksi, what is yours?)[41] An exchange of telephone numbers marks the beginning of a love relationship between the two, much to the younger sister's disapproval. After Sebaetseng leaves the stage, in soliloquy, Toksi arrogantly promises to take care of her, especially since "I can tell she comes from a poor background, " obviously intending to take advantage of her poverty and vulnerability.

Indeed, he begins showering her with gifts like cell-phones and perfumes. As she excitedly opens the gifts, some audience members at the back of the room unanimously interject with, "*Owaii*…!" (Argh…!) - an expression of disappointment directed at Sebaetseng's short-sightedness, gullibility and failure to recognize that this is a trap: the beginning of her end. I argue that this character's naivety is inevitable given her age and social class. As a young girl living in poverty, burdened with the responsibility of taking care of her younger sister, she is easily impressionable. The audience's response simultaneously indicates Sebaetseng's gullibility and the audience's knowledge of this fact.

[41] All translations are my own.

The audience's predictions come to fruition in the next scene when Sebaetseng, dressed in a pink bathrobe, slowly slides across the stage; she is visibly quite pregnant and is crying tears of labor pains and abandonment. The two men in her life are nowhere to be found. With the help of her younger sister she makes it to the hospital where she gives birth to a baby boy. She later becomes an alcoholic, and the *shebeen*[42] becomes her second home. She is ultimately diagnosed with a damaged liver and advised to stop drinking. Sebaetseng limps onto the stage, crying, and seven girls who stood with their backs facing the audience throughout the play burst into song: "*Morena wa rona re lebela go wena, re utlwele botlhoko. Bojalwa ke sera."* (We turn to you our Lord, have mercy on us. Alcohol is our enemy.) Sebaetseng adds, "Alcohol is bad my sister, it has damaged my liver, it is not a stress reliever, it kills."

In this moment, the seven girls, now facing the audience and joined by the sister/narrator, end the play with this unanimous chanted message: "*Bojalwa ga se botshabelo, re tshwanetse go gakologelwa gore Modimo o re file ditlhaloganyo go intsha mo mathateng. Ke sone se re boning go le botlholwa go kopana go lwantsha bojawla. Ra re ga re bone ditiro mme ntswa re nwa bojalwa."* (Alcohol does not provide refuge; we have to remember that God gave us brains so we can use them to get ourselves out of trouble. This is why we have found it important to come together to fight alcohol. We claim to be unemployed and yet we drink alcohol…"

[42] The *shebeen* has the same connotations in South Africa as in Botswana, where is also locally referred to as *sepoto* (spot). It is usually (if not always) run and owned by a woman, who is nicknamed "Mma Sepoto" and/or "Shebeen queen" in South Africa. This place acts as an alternative to a bar, and is where homebrewed alcohol is sold. Because of the cheaper prices, it usually attracts the lower class members of society. It creates a sense of community for most marginalized members of society who tend to take refuge in interacting with those in similar situations while they drink. Unfortunately, this also becomes a hotbed for all sorts of crime such as rape, assault and illegal drugs.

Post-Performance Discussion

At the end of the performance, Mr. Tsietsonyana, acting as the facilitator/joker, immediately takes the stage and begins to engage the audience in a post-performance discussion. He begins with a raffle draw in which the audience members use the ticket numbers they received upon entering the hall to win the red promotional t-shirts as prizes. Right after the raffle draw, he invites "*botlhe ba ba ikitseng e le dinwi tsa bojalwa, bo mankge…le rona re ba itse*" (all those who regard themselves as unbeatable drunkards, real experts…those that we know) to come on stage. The audience bursts into laughter as two audience members take the stage: a young man with dreadlocks wearing khaki cargo pants and a black t-shirt and a young woman wearing black jeans and a light blue golf-shirt. By willingly coming on-stage, they are each displaying an embodied act of self-proclaimed drunkard. The audience's laughter intensifies, now accompanied by clapping of hands. Attesting to the girl's embodied claim, a young man sitting right behind me, shouts, "*Yo, ngwanyana o a bonwa*!" (This girl drinks!) A girl next to the young man asks in a lower voice, "Is that a girl?" The young man emphatically responds, "*Ee, ke ngwanyana, ngwanyana*" (Yes, it is a *girl, a girl.*) The facilitator explains the format of the "competition": the two volunteers are to engage in a form of debate over who is a better drinker, supporting their claims with experiential evidence. The audience, acting as adjudicators, will judge the winner based on how well he/she defends his/her position. By clapping their hands in excitement, the audience performs an agreement to this contract.

Sandwiched by the two audience members, with the words, "Are you [the audience] saying this woman (tapping the young lady on her right shoulder) can beat this

man (tapping the young man on his left shoulder) at drinking?"[43] the facilitator prompts the two to substantiate their embodied acts with a verbal defense of their claim to alcoholism. The audience unanimously delightedly shouts, "Yes, she can!" clearly demonstrating their knowledge of the two volunteers as well as their drinking capabilities. The young man begins to speak, but the audience's laughter and clapping makes it hard hear what he is saying except for the sentence, "Alcohol gives me power (clenching his palms into fists), and I can drink until sunrise…" The facilitator steps forward to call the audience to order before inviting the young girl to defend her position. Before the girl opens her mouth to speak, the man behind me further emphasizes his knowledge of the girl, "She *is* a drunkard this one, just look at her, she did not sleep. She was up drinking all night!" Everyone, including the girl herself, laughs. She then proceeds to speak with a lot of confidence: "I am an expert of drinking, and when I drink, I speak in a higher voice. I hear people saying that alcohol doesn't help with stress, for me it does! When I have problems, I drink, and the following morning I am in a better position to confront them! However, I am not saying that alcohol prevents problems; rather it helps me to release!" The audience roars in agreement. One female yells, "Yes, I like that!" Another male voice about two rows behind me quietly adds, "She is telling the truth though." The facilitator then steps forward to declare the end of the first round of the debate.

In the final round, the two volunteers are instructed to drive their arguments home. The young man discourages the audience from thinking that alcohol can help reduce their stress levels, arguing that alcohol actually deludes them by minimizing problems: "It can make you think that you're more powerful than those you're in conflict

[43] My translation

with, which can lead into a physical fight." In a gestured allusion to the police officers (alternatingly touching his left and right shoulders, where police officers wear their badges), he further warns the audience that the moment they get into fights, they are giving police officers a job. Everyone, including the two female police officers (who have all along been watching passively but attentively), laughs at the gestured police officers. His counterpart responds by agreeing that while alcohol helps her deal with her problems, she does not deny that it can also cause problems, such as exaggerating one's physical power. Pointing to a scar below her left cheek, she supports her argument, "You see this scar (repeatedly rubbing it to emphasize her point)? It was caused by alcohol." Marking the end of the debate, the facilitator adds, "You have heard their experiences and opinions about alcohol. Now who do you think is the winner?" The audience unanimously shouts, "Both of them! Give them their t-shirts!"(Referring to the prizes). More audience members come on-stage, some to say how they identify with the on-stage story (about broken families). Others, such as one Youth representative official, encourage the youth to think about their futures.

The facilitator opens up the last form of audience participation by calling for "various performance forms (joke, poem or song) that can join the play in critiquing alcohol." However, no one came on stage to give a performance. Instead, one audience member who seems to be well known, and who also appears to be mentally disturbed, gets up on stage. The audience breaks into what seems like a dismissive laughter, probably because of his mental disability. He entertains the audience by giving his testimony about how he lost part of his left ear (he repeatedly twists the remaining tip of his ear until one audience member shouts, "Do you want to finish it off now?") because

of a car accident caused by drunk driving. After leaving the stage the facilitator corroborates his story by giving details of the accident. He uses this moment to further remind the audience about the dangers of alcohol. He then signals the end of the performance by announcing the second performance in the afternoon. Thereafter, he asks one audience member to give a closing prayer, marking the end of the performance.

Discussion

From the moment one comes into the performance space, and throughout the various episodes of the performance, the main themes are clear: the dangers of alcohol and its effects on individuals and families. As a way of achieving efficacy, Moremogolo employs both central and peripheral techniques to invoke sympathy, fear and condemnation of alcohol abuse. Dramaturgically, the words on the banner, *"Twantsho ya tiriso botlhaswa ya bojalwa le go tshwakgoga*," and in particular, the word "*twantsho*" (a combat) prepares and invites the audience to be both a witness and participant in the combat that is about to be launched. To further augment the visual signals, before the performance commences, a representative of the Ministry of Health stands up to address the now-settled audience. Code-switching between Setswana and English, she says:

> We, the Ministry of Health and Moremogolo, cannot make a decision for you. We are just going to teach about the dangers of alcohol abuse. We all know the extent to which alcohol destroys our lives. As a young person, know that if you decide to go to a bar, it's your choice, the consequences are going to be faced by you alone; not any other person, not the government, not Moremogolo. So I'm begging you to please make the right choices. But in short, I'm sure you will agree with me that the money that you waste on alcohol can go towards buying a

cow or two, right?[44] So try to weigh the benefits and disadvantages of alcohol use and make the right choices. Thank you very much

In an arguably rhetorical way, she is appealing to the audience, specifically to youth, to take part in this fight against alcohol. In view of the off-stage conversations that I had with Moremogolo and YOHO members, the Ministry of Health representative is making assumptions about a positive correlation between alcohol and money. Particularly in the case of unemployed young girls, alcohol is bought for them by either their boyfriends or prospective boyfriends. According to one girl, the latter usually buy them alcohol with the hope of taking them to bed thereafter. During one of our workshop meetings, Teko, a young man from YOHO, adds, "*Fa ngwanyana a ya bareng a sena madi a bo a dumela go rekelwa bojalwa ke motho yo a sa mo itseng, a bo a itse fela gore o ipakela mathata: a bo a ipaakanyeditse go robala le motho ene yoo."* (If a girl goes to a bar without money and accepts drinks from a stranger, she is automatically looking for trouble. She should be prepared for the consequences: sleeping with that stranger.) In this regard, although the Ministry of Health representative is right about youth having the choice to either go to the bar or not, she is at the same time disregarding some crucial issues these girls experience, such as the exchange of one's body for alcohol: the fact that alcohol consumption does not necessarily equate with having money. In fact, based on my off-stage discussions with the youth of Moremogolo and YOHO, and on the young girl's perspective in the post-performance discussion, the opposite is true for most of these unemployed youth: when they struggle to meet their basic needs, they seek release

[44] This reference to a cow demonstrates the significance of a cow to Setswana livelihood. As discussed in previous chapters, a cow symbolizes wealth in Setswana since it can be exchanged for other goods. Additionally, it is a source of food (milk and meat) and is used as bride wealth.

in alcohol, just like Sebaetseng. Thus, I maintain that by explicitly suggesting that Sebaetseng's plight is self-inflicted, Moremogolo is engaged in a narrative that reduces a collective gendered and economic problem to a personal one.

Furthermore, the reference to a Christian God as the giver of human intellect clearly spells out Moremogolo's moralizing position. The line, "Alcohol does not provide refuge; we have to remember that God gave us brains so we can use them to get ourselves out of trouble" is a signal for a moralistic narrative that is inextricably tied to the legacy of colonizing Christian norms and practices. Dramaturgically, the narrative's simplistic equation of Christian moral values with intelligence and with a lack of problems is not only insulting to the audience, but it also serves to blame those who find refuge in alcohol—and not in God—for their poverty statuses. By this logic, the solution is simple: drinking is a sign of amorality, which in turn yields poverty. Interestingly, the narrative negates the observation made by a Nigerian systematic theologian and Roman Catholic priest, Felix Nwatu, that the vast majority of Christians in post-colonial Africa are struggling and poor, so much so that they continue to wonder whether or not the church is the solution (as Moremogolo suggests) or the source of their problems.

Having been prepared by the banners and the speech, the performance evokes fear and sympathy by the opening scene of violence: a husband assaulting his wife who is wriggling helplessly on the floor, crying out "*ijoo!ijoo!ijoo*!" The mother's cry "*ijoo*!*ijoo*!" is taken up in a song by the chorus, which consists of the seven girls lined up at the back of the stage, all dressed in purple and white pinafore dresses with matching purple and white pants. With three girls on one end of the banner and the remaining four on the other end of the banner (without obstructing the audience's view of the banner),

the seven girls present their backs to the audience and, just like the banners, are present throughout the performance. The chorus plays a crucial part in the performance: singing and dancing. Many popular theatre companies variously employ song and dance as elements of the Tswana cultural performance forms. Just like the use of local languages, song and dance tend to bring the performances closer to the communities. In this performance, song is used as a performative device. It engages the audience and is one of the central techniques of capturing the motifs and commenting on various scenes of the performance. For instance, with the immediate singing of the song "*ijoo mama*" the chorus merges the mother's cries and those of helpless children, capturing them with the lyrics, "*gongwe le gongwe kwa o leng, o re gopole mama boela gae…*" (Wherever you are mother, please remember us, please come back home…), as the children realize they are "motherless" upon discovering their mother's letter. Both the melody and significance of the song evoke fear and sympathy for the assaulted wife and most importantly for the abandoned young girls.

I propose that this performance is successful in showing the impact of alcohol abuse on the home and, by extension, the role of the mother in a Setswana home. The phrase "*ijoo mama"* captures the undeniable significance of the mother in a child's life. [45] In Setswana, when a child of either gender encounters any type of danger such as falling, being beaten or being scared, he/she cries out "*ijoo mama/mme*!" or "*mme wee*!" which translates to "mother, help!" This phrase becomes one of the many means of capturing the significance of the role of the Motswana woman in the home, as discussed in Chapter One. Many African and black feminist scholars, such as Beyala, Makuchi, Nfa-Abbenyi,

[45] This phrase varies from one ethnic group to another. Its variants include "*ijoo mme wee*!" and "*mme wee*!" "*Mme*," like "*mama*," means mother.

Oyewumi and hooks, agree that one of the fundamental roles of a woman is to provide a home that is a private space in which children are protected, affirmed, loved and nurtured. In Setswana, this belief is captured by the saying "*Lolwapa lo thata ka mosadi*" (the strength of a home lies in that of a woman). The nurturing is further extended to her community, hence the Setswana saying "*mosadi thari ya sechaba*" (a woman is the cradle of the nation). Therefore, without undermining the capabilities and role of a father in the home, to a traditional Motswana audience member who has already been exposed to the irresponsibility and tyranny of Sebaetseng's father, it is not surprising that the absence of the mother coupled with the lack of financial support yields a disintegrated family to the detriment of the young girls. Young as she is, Sebaetseng is forced to grow up and assume the roles of both a father and a mother to herself and her younger sister. Burdened with the responsibility of providing for herself and her younger sister, Sebaetseng has very few opportunities to make good choices. She gets into a relationship with an older Toksi mainly for material benefits. When her younger sister cautions her about Toksi, Sebaetseng tells her she is too young to understand, suggesting that she does not have other options.

Sebaetseng finds herself in a situation that to a large extent mirrors that of most out-of-school young girls (such as Mama Theatre, Moremogolo and YOHO members): one of limited education yielding limited job opportunities. Given the high unemployment rate, most of these youth find themselves in similar predicaments.[46]

[46] According to The Trading Economics, the unemployment rate in Botswana was 17.8 percent in 2010. With a population of about 2 million, this means that about 356,000 people are unemployed. According to Botswana's "Sunday Standard" (October 15, 2012), Botswana is one the three countries that drive the high unemployment rates in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the "Sunday Standard" report, young people between the ages of 15 and 29 are three times more likely than their older counterparts to be unemployed.

Unfortunately, this is something that the Ministry of Health representative conveniently forgets in her speech: the fact that although youth need to take responsibility for their own actions, sometimes the realities of their circumstances impose choices upon them. Such circumstances, as demonstrated in the play, include child neglect and abandonment by the "present" father and the absent mother, respectively.

The violence with which the performance begins is inextricably linked to a series of love-related femicides (intimate partner homicides) that Botswana has experienced since 2004.[47] In these instances of gender-based violence, locally called "passion killings", the perpetrators were men while the victims were women. Typically, when men are told, for instance, that the relationship is over, they resort to violence because they think that their authority has been undermined. Writing about these "passion killings" in Botswana, Alao further asserts the implication of patriarchy in these murders:

> It is believed that the patriarchal nature of most African settings, the ideology of male supremacy have relegated women to a subordinate role. Consequently, respect for women in any relationship with men is lopsided in favor of men and has led to abuse of women, including intimate femicide (311).

Just like the domestic violence in the performance, as murders that usually occur in the home, these "passion killings" challenge and complicate the idea of the home as a safe place, instead transforming the home into a site of pain and danger for the supposed nurturer, the woman. The "passion killings" invade and violate the domestic realm (marked as female). Because it disempowers the woman, I posit that this type of domestic

[47] Deinera Exner and Wilfreda Thurston (2009) report that between January 2003 and November 2006, there was a total of 248 reported murders, with 225 of the victims being women and 23 being men. The 23 men are actually perpetrators of some of these murders; that is, they kill themselves after committing the murder. Given the AIDS pandemic that is affecting Botswana with a small population of about two million, the statistics are scary and a cause for concern.

violence discredits "the home as a place of safety and protection from the wild world out there" (Nnaemeka 18).

The patriarchal oppressive system described by Alao under which women operate is also suggested by the gendered positioning of bodies and how they encounter one another on stage: an unconscious reiteration/evidence of the off-stage power dynamics at play. Despite the fact there are more female bodies on stage, the only two male bodies on stage are endowed with a lot of power over their female counterparts. For instance, Sebaetseng's father represents physical power over his female family members: his wife and two daughters. The play opens with Sebaetseng's mother lying flat on the floor, wriggling and rolling from side to side as she tries to avoid her husband's blows. This same pattern is observed in the encounter between Sebaetseng's father's body and those of his two daughters, whom he finds lamenting their mother's flight. As soon as he enters the stage, the girls simultaneously fall on their knees on the ground out of fear of their father. The father remains standing, sandwiched between his two daughters, Sebaetseng clinging to her father's right knee while her sister clings to the left, attempting to stop him from executing his threat of leaving them. With the three bodies shaped like an isosceles triangle—in which the father occupies the top and longest point while both girls occupy the two lower points—the unequal power relations of seniority and gender between father and daughters are crystal clear. Seemingly enjoying the power his body is exerting over those of his daughters, with his hands he simultaneously pushes the daughters away. As both girls fall to the ground unanimously, his vertical body steps away from the new horizontal position of the girls' bodies. The positioning of the three bodies is laden with not only unequal power relations, but with distance and detachment

of the male body. Thus the only encounters between Sebaetseng's father's body, his wife and his daughters are those of violence. The female bodies herein articulate this violence against them through the horizontal positioning, which suggests victimhood.

In the same manner, Sebaetseng's boyfriend, Toksi, represents the normalized sexual predation against the young female body. This sexual exploitation parades as intimacy and love, as Sebaetseng's vulnerability as a poor young girl and her cultural socialization blur her vision and prevent her from seeing the relationship for what it is: exploitation. This unequal power relation plays out through the encounters between the bodies of younger Sebaetseng and older Toksi. When things are still "good" in the early encounters of hugging and exchanging of gifts, their bodies are vertical and parallel to one another. Even though we do not get to witness (except by imagination) the sexual exploitation on stage, its impact is visible on Sebaetseng's body. Marking the end of the "good" encounters, in the next scene, a highly pregnant Sebaetseng enters the scene by sliding with difficulty across the stage to an imaginary hospital. The young body clearly articulates the pain and exploitation brought upon it by Toksi: the pregnant belly, the tears rolling down her cheeks, the crooked face and the difficulty in walking. In this scene, Sebaetseng's body remains low to the ground, indicative of her helplessness and victimhood, just like that of her mother.

Whether spontaneous or by design, I argue that the vertical and horizontal gendered positioning of the bodies in both instances is facilitated by the cultural training of the bodies of the performers and the minds of those controlling the narrative. There is a clear connection between everyday performances (off-stage) and this particular theatrical performance (on-stage) of gender, power and subordination. That is, in the act

of performance, the bodies are conforming to the patriarchal stereotypes on which their oppression and "prejudice against them was rationalized" (Foster 411). The bodies are thus externalizing the internalized Setswana cultural concepts of masculinity and femininity that inform the dramatic scripting: men are strong and women are weak. Interestingly, this prejudice even extends to alcoholism as a gendered issue, placing it within a male sphere as suggested by the conversation between the two audience members (a man and a woman) sitting behind me: "Is that a girl?", "Yes it is a *girl, a girl*." The woman claps her hand in disbelief and disapproval, "*Ijoo*!"[48] Both the man's emphasis on the gender of the alcoholic and the woman's disbelief and disappointment reflect the larger patriarchal expectations of a "good woman" against which women drunkards are judged. The deviations (Sebaetseng's and that of the drunkard female audience member) from these expectations in turn rationalize punishment. Therefore, by positioning the bodies in the manner described above (the constant vertical and robust positions of the male bodies versus the low horizontal positions of the female bodies) Moremogolo forces the viewing audience to envision the battered and pregnant bodies as helpless victims incapable of saving themselves. Even worse, the pregnant body is presented as deserving this violence. This positioning further reinforces narratives of woman as a helpless victim.

Interrogating Victimhood

The play succeeds in depicting the positions of subordination that women and girls occupy under patriarchy, as suggested by the on-stage and off-stage performances described above. However, the way that the play frames victimhood is problematic. The male-centric narrative is twofold: first, it equates victimhood with helplessness and lack

[48] An expression of surprise.

of agency. Second, it is a discourse that blames and punishes the victim. I claim that even though these women operate under the oppressive patriarchal structures, they do not always succumb to these positions of victimhood.

By presenting the women under patriarchal systems of oppression, through explicit representations of violence (a husband beating his wife and violently pushing away his daughters, and a boyfriend impregnating and abandoning his girlfriend), the performance evokes feelings of sympathy and fear for the victims. However, fear immediately shifts to blame as the father staggers in and starts calling his wife names, proclaiming her to be a "witch" who has abandoned her family. In the case of Sebaetseng, the blame extends to punishment as she is presented as a useless alcoholic soon after giving birth. In the words of her younger sister, "she failed to heed doctors' advice to stop drinking and that's how she ended with a damaged liver." By punishing Sebaetseng and leaving the perpetrators (the abusive father and the exploitative boyfriend) unpunished, the performance participates in an ideology that blames the victim, providing only a superficial confrontation of the miserable condition of the victim. While the performance is right in implicating the victim (Sebaetseng) in what happens to her, it is biased in exonerating the perpetrators.

The questions that should be asked are: What drives Sebaetseng to engage in sexual relations with an older man? What drives her to indulge in alcohol? What role does the mining town play here? Perhaps the facilitator/joker should have used the post-performance discussions to fill this gap. However, as I will discuss in detail later, the post-performance discussions seems to be part of the overarching narrative that ignores the economic and cultural forces behind the conditions of both Sebaetseng and her

mother. This same erasure is evident in the Ministry of Health representative's speech. The performance falls short of holding the perpetrators accountable for producing the conditions under which the women in this narrative must struggle to survive.

This silence and failure to reprimand the male perpetrators is consistent with the gendered Setswana tradition that endorses a man's dominance over a woman. This superiority is expressed in proverbs such as "*Monna ke tlhogo ya lolwapa*" (A man is the head of the family) and "*ga di ke di etelelwa ke manamagadi pele*" (Females never lead). Under this system, the girl children face double oppression: generational and gender. By focusing on external factors such as alcohol, the performance (whether by design or out of ignorance) removes the association between violence against women and the larger problems of social silence and patriarchy. This gendered blaming framework further affirms the key role of gender in understanding domestic violence. Furthermore, as Conquergood argues, the "ideology of blaming the victims legitimizes domination and control over them" (198). In this case the narrative serves the patriarchal national discourse.

Even though the performance succeeds in drawing connections between the off-stage everyday realities of many women's struggles with and confrontations of entrenched socio-cultural inequalities, it falls short of exploring possible options for women and also of recognizing strategies that women employ to resist these challenging situations. For instance, the play appears so desperate to portray women as helpless victims that it ignores other possibilities and options for these women, especially the young girls. A question that runs through my mind and remains unanswered as I watch the performance is, "Why aren't these young girls in school?" As many African feminist

scholars acknowledge, education attainment contributes significantly to the upward mobility of all who receive it. Specifically, it is through education that most African women gain social recognition, political power and liberation from local and imported patriarchal norms such as those discussed above (Hernandez et al.). So, it is surprising that the play is silent about why these school-age girls are not in school.

Additionally, Moremogolo's portrayal of family seems to be derived from Western/metropolitan understandings in a Setswana context. In engaging with such decontextualized and pessimistic portrayals of the girls as helpless, the play misses yet another logical option for the girls: receiving support outside her immediate family. Is it possible that, instead of turning to alcohol, Sebaetseng could have sought her extended family's support? The play "forgets" the cultural context that gives it life and to which it refers as it disregards the role of extended family in the Setswana setting. Like Oyewumi aptly argues, even though the mother plays a significant role in the nuclear family, in an African context, mothering is not a solitary experience; rather it is a collective experience. It is from this family concept that the phrase "It takes a village to raise a child" originates. Why then do the girls' aunts and grandmothers (as co-mothers) not step in to help? In Setswana, family institution (*lolwapa)* is the first step in the process of conflict resolution. At this level, both nuclear and extended family members are involved in dispute resolution. Focusing on arbitration, the main aim is to bring together relatives familiar with the customs and with the specific situation of those in conflict. As per Rankopo's apt observation, nuclear family disputes are typically addressed by both paternal and maternal aunts, uncles and siblings. Thus the performance's absence of extended family interventions in these moments of conflict is questionable and

unrealistic. Consequently this de-contextualization of family becomes the basis for possibly dismissing the girls' hopeless situation as unrealistic and preventable.

Another important issue is how the performance of Moremogolo articulates victimhood. I argue that Moremogolo adopts a simplistic and binary oppositional reading that equates victimhood with powerlessness/weakness/lack of agency. The on-stage violence with which the play begins substantiates the subordination and oppression that women face in their quotidian lives. It is a fundamental foregrounding of the oppressive situation within which Sebaetseng's mother is operating and also of the choice she makes to resist this oppression. Given the significant role of the mother in the home, the assault and insults that Sebaetseng's mother suffers in her supposed domain magnifies her struggle and resistance. This socially assigned role of the mother is one of the many instances that put women such as Mma Sebaetseng in difficult situations where they have to make equally "difficult decision(s) to leave their spouses and children in search of their own happiness" (Hernandez et al.5). In this case, Mma Sebaetseng is more in pursuit of safety than of happiness. Given the intimate partner homicides discussed above, the situation necessitates her brave action. While running away from home does not necessarily make her the victor in the situation—indeed, her actions might be perceived as an irresponsible, weak and scandalous—I argue that it is an act of resistance. As seen in Hernandez et al.'s book, *African Women Writing Resistance,* many grassroots women across Africa (from Zimbabwe, Kenya and Senegal) define resistance as:

> …challenging beliefs, traditions, and values that place women below men in terms of being heard, making decisions and choices…Saying 'no' to the patriarchal system and values that continue to disempower, subjugate, and

> undermine personal dignity…The political, moral, intellectual, and spiritual refusal to succumb to any form of violence or oppression (6).

Drawing inspiration from African feminist scholars such as Nnaemeka, Hernandez et al and Nfa-Abbenyi, who argue that what is important in such oppressive structures is not whether or not the oppressed survive or are crushed, "what is crucial is the fact that they *choose* to act" (Nnaemeka 4). By running away and saving herself from further violence that could lead to a "passion killing," Mma Sebaetseng is actively participating in a process of self-definition and self-actualization.

In creating her own subjectivity, Mma Sebaetseng separates herself from the patriarchal-defined institutions of family and motherhood. This perception of motherhood, which feminist arguments of the 1970s and 80s disputed, links motherhood with wifehood and victimhood as it "denies to females the creation of a subjectivity and world that is open and free" (Nnaemeka 5). In the African context, African feminists differentiate between motherhood as a patriarchal institution and motherhood as an experience of mothering with its pains and rewards. These pains are expressed by Mma Sebaetseng's youngest daughter as she laments in reminiscence, "Oh mother, we are lost without you because even though you didn't earn enough, you always struggled to provide for us and making us happy through doing part-time jobs." Therefore, in view of the predicament she must have faced (i.e., choosing between her children and herself), her decision to leave her children makes her agency and resistance grander. By choosing her life over her family, Mma Sebaetseng defies one aspect of the Setswana culture that continues to entrench women's subordination to men. In his discussion of the social stigma attached to women experiencing domestic violence, Tapologo Maundeni states

that among other things, cultural factors not only play a key role in ongoing intimate partner violence but are also primary reasons why Batswana women stay in abusive relationships; that is, women are socialized to accept their inferior status in society and their subordination to men. Authors such as Bonu and Diop-Sidibe also aptly emphasize the importance of recognizing the impact of conservative gender norms on the cultural acceptability of partner abuse in patriarchal societies. In this regard, Mma Sebaetseng's act of detaching herself from an institution that is potentially fatal and poses a threat to her well-being deserves to be celebrated rather than frowned upon, as her husband does in the play. She does what most women in her position are afraid to do: leaves an abusive relationship. Yet, the dramaturgy of the play does not allow for a celebration of this choice.

In one of the few studies conducted on "passion killings" in Botswana, Exner and Thurston observe that many Batswana women stay in abusive relationships that ultimately lead to homicides mainly because of "…stigma, patriarchy and social silence" (11). The same observation is also expressed by young Moremogolo girls, who do not report violence because they fear that their parents will blame them since they do not expect them to be engaging in sexual relationships. Additionally, girls explain that they are afraid that the police will make fun of them and blame them for provoking the men into physically abusing them. As Exner and Thurston write, victims of passion killings are "blamed explicitly for terminating the relationship or 'ditching' their partners, and implicitly for causing an argument or misunderstanding that led to the murder" (8). Thus Mma Sebaetseng's act of leaving her home is an acknowledgement of the violence, a disruption of the silence, and a statement that, contrary to the traditional patriarchal

Setswana culture that endows men with dominance over women, violence against women is not acceptable. Even as a subtext in the supposed major theme of alcohol abuse, unequal gender relations expressed in gender-based violence is the underlying problem (as opposed to alcohol) - a theme that directly threatens the well-being of women. Unfortunately, in Moremogolo's narrative these patriarchal and economic structures that are oppressive to women are masked under "alcoholism." In this way, Moremogolo adopts a framing that blames outside factors and the victim. This framing is consistent with Exner and Thurston's observation that alcohol is often blamed for the many occurrences of "passion killings". Thus, what is observed here is a simultaneous match and mismatch of the on-stage and off-stage perspectives on gender-based violence and alcohol.

2. YOHO's *The Flower*: A more Explicit and Situated Interrogation of Domestic Violence

While domestic violence is a subtheme portrayed as one of the effects of the major theme (alcohol abuse) in Moremogolo's play, it is explicitly explored in YOHO's play, *The Flower,* performed in Peleng Community Hall in Lobatse, one of YOHO's affiliate sites. For most Batswana, the mention of Lobatse (commonly and fondly known as *Bandleng* by its dwellers) evokes images of gangsters, locally known as *bo-tsotsi*. In particular, Peleng, a township located on a hill-top, is considered the heartbeat of Lobatse. Peleng's reputation as a crime-infested area and hub for gangsters goes as far back as the 1970s. As the local Superintendent, Paul Molapisi, attests, during these years, the township "was a dangerous place even for police who could not patrol the township's streets at night because they could be attacked." The prevalent crimes were assault and

severe bodily harm. Although the crime rate has declined over the years due to a good working relationship between the police and the community, Peleng, like many other places in Botswana, experiences problems of poverty, HIV/AIDS, crime and domestic violence.

Like many other community halls in the country, Peleng Community Hall typically has eclectic uses that include theatre performances, beauty pageants and official community meetings and events. As a community-based performance, YOHO's performance of *The Flower* is typically free of charge and audiences are accustomed to this. The lack of entrance fee is what in part necessitates popular theatre groups' reliance on funding: they are not-for-profit organizations. As locals of Lobatse, YOHO members typically have friends and relatives with whom they interact regularly; therefore, publicity is done mainly by word of mouth. To the audiences, performances like these are a source of entertainment and socialization. Audiences are therefore always eager to attend, as evidenced by the large attendance on this particular day. Although tonight is an exception, as a youth organization, YOHO performances are usually preceded by young musicians as a way of both promoting the artists and inducing the audiences.

YOHO uses the prologue to directly confront domestic violence and intimate partner homicides. Given by the male assistant director, Mandla Pule, the prologue implicates the audience in its exploration of the ills associated with love: "the physical and emotional abuse of women, murder and suicide all in the name of love." Set in a cemetery, the story is narrated by a husband (now a prisoner) and his deceased wife (now a ghost). Through flashbacks, the characters share how they ended up in their new positions: incarceration and death, respectively.

The play opens with the prisoner holding a bouquet of flowers, followed by a loud thundering sound as the corpse erupts from its grave. Dressed in a wedding gown, the wife holds a bouquet of flowers as the two reminisce about their wedding day: happier times. In the next scene, the wife cries out, "Help me!" In a bloody t-shirt, the husband roars, "I am the man of the house, in charge of the house, understood!" This physical violence seems to be a recurring event between the two. According to the wife, the violence was always followed by an apology in the form of flowers. In another scene, drunk and staggering, the husband boasts, "This is *my* wife!" as he hits his chest with a fist, emphasizing his arrogant possession of his wife. "I married her with ten cows! Who is your mother? Didn't she teach you who the head of the family is? Who are you to tell me how many kids we can have?" he yells, hurling insults at his scared wife. From the wife's narration, we learn that she repeatedly reported the matter to her parents, who repeatedly discouraged her from divorcing her husband. In the last scene, she tells how her husband finally brutally killed her: by ripping her heart and lungs out. The play ends with the imprisoned husband dancing around the corpse, with the spotlight on the dead body. The epilogue, performed by a man, is an appeal to the audience, a call to "the need to educate men lest they become more aggressive."

Discussion

The Flower engages more explicitly with the theme of domestic violence and intimate partner homicides - an issue cited as a threat to the well-being of women as evidenced by discussions held in off-stage spaces with members of Moremogolo (as previously discussed) and YOHO. The violence takes many forms, ranging from physical assault to the sexual exploitation discussed by the Moremogolo girls. A young girl from

YOHO shared her story about how her ex-boyfriend once drove her to a cemetery in the middle of the night and left her there "to teach her a lesson" after a verbal fight.

Just as the off-stage personal stories support the idea that violence against women is an important and relevant theme, the Botswana government similarly cites it as a critical issue that needs to be "arrested and reversed" (Vision). In order to achieve this mission, the government, via the Vision, proposes the use of community-based education (including popular theatre) among other intervention strategies. In this regard, the play *The Flower* can be seen as a direct connection between the off-stage and on-stage performances: it represents the views and concerns of both the dominant (official) and marginal (women's) narratives.

The play is an unequivocal and complex engagement with the theme of domestic violence. Unlike the newspaper framings discussed by Exner and Thurson, the play focuses on the violence that happens *before* the murder, thus directly linking the murder with the violence. This direct link makes an apt association between the murders and a larger social problem: patriarchal tradition. To this end, the play directly blames and places violence against women within the Setswana cultural context. An important dimension that this cultural context offers is the power relation between marital partners (in this case) because most violence takes place within a domestic context, thereby making "passion killings" gendered crimes. As the Women's Affairs Department's "Report on the Study of the Socio-Economic Implications of Violence against Women in Botswana" observes, "men have been socialized to be dominant over women and to use physical violence, threats of violence, and other means…to maintain their control over their wives or partners" (122). This position of dominance is expounded by traditional

institutions and practices such as that of *go laa*.[49] This practice is captured in the short story, "Snapshots of a Wedding," by Botswana feminist writer Bessie Head. Emphasizing the role of a "good wife", Head writes, "Daughter, you must carry water for your husband.[50] Beware, that at all times, he is the owner of the house and must be obeyed. Do not mind if he stops now and then and talks to other ladies. Let him feel free to come and go as he likes…Be a good wife! Be a good wife…" (30-1).

This traditional dominant role of the man is emphasized in the play by the husband's self-aggrandizements: "*Ke nna tlhogo ya lolwapa"* (I'm the head of this family) and "Who are you to tell me how many children we can have?"; implying that his wife (as a woman) is nothing and is subordinate to him as her husband. It is important to note that, as a practice that assigns women a peripheral role in the family and society, this assignment of traditional gender roles supposedly has/should have no place in a modern democratic society that is based on gender equality. The government and the community therefore constantly challenge the tradition at various levels. The WAD in particular is charged with the responsibility of promoting gender equality in Botswana. It co-

[49] "*Go laa,*" which translates to "to counsel," is a counseling ceremony that is common amongst most (if not all) ethnic groups. This ceremony is still practiced since most couples prefer to combine traditional and modern ways of celebrating. Before the end of the wedding feast and the handing over of the bride to the groom's people, the bride and groom are separately called to an isolated part of the homestead to be counseled. The bride is met by women and lectured on the demands and virtues of married life. The groom is also counseled, only by married men, on the obligations and responsibilities of being married. In some ethnic groups this ceremony may take place in the final meeting between the two families, before the wedding ceremony. By the time the wedding ceremony is over, the two sides have met so many times that new bonds of friendship emerge. After the marriage has taken place, the two families regard each other as relatives bound together by the marriage of their children. They, from then onwards, cooperate closely in resolving disputes between the husband and wife, invite one another to each other's family occasions, and share in other social activities. ("Embassy of the Republic of Botswana: Traditional Government and Social Order").

[50] The phrase "carry water" translates to "*go ga metsi.*" It is a phrase embedded with multiple cultural meanings. On the surface level it denotes the responsibilities of a wife as the housekeeper: fetching water and cooking for and taking care of her family. On a connotative level, it means sexually satisfying her husband.

coordinates gender mainstreaming at the policy-making level but works with local communities, groups and organizations (government and non-government) to promote program planning and execution in areas of common concern. These organizations include the Emang Basadi Women's Association[51] , the Botswana Centre for Human Rights (Ditshwanelo), the Young Women Christian Association, Metlhaetsile Women's Information Centre and the Kagisano Society Women's Shelter Project. They work independently and as a group to provide counseling, legal aid and shelter services to assist women and girl children who have been subjected to violence. They also raise public awareness on women's issues and lobby the government to change legal procedures and laws.

Despite such efforts, as evidenced by the young girls' off-stage stories and the performance, even today "Batswana men consider themselves the head of the household in very patriarchal ways" (Denbow and Phenyo, 153) and they get uncomfortable with anything that seems to challenge their authority. In fact, the changing gender roles stemming from efforts towards achieving gender equality, the shift from patriarchal beliefs, and the increased socio-economic freedom and opportunities for women become part of the reasons for the violence against women. In the play, the wife's attempt to suggest the number of children the couple should have is met with her husband's harsh rejection. Such attitudes are born out of this cultural expectation of a "good wife." It should be noted that, inasmuch as the wife was traditionally expected to carry herself within this idealized paradigm of what it takes to be a "good wife," the husband was also

[51] "*Emang Basadi*" translates to "Stand up Women." The Emang Basadi Women's Association came into formal existence in 1986 to lobby against laws that discriminated against women in Botswana. Its catalyst was the enactment of the 1982 Citizenship Amendment Act, which sought to deny women married to non-citizen men the right to pass their citizenship to their offspring.

expected to successfully perform his duties as a "good husband." These duties, among others, included providing for his family and not neglecting his wife and/or children. Unfortunately, some men (married or not) use their economic power to oppress their spouses and partners, as observed in the case of Sebaetseng and Toksi in the Moremogolo play.

In view of the above, it can be argued that traditions, perceptions about traditions, and the changing cultural, social and economic environments have influence on the peripheral position of women in society and on men's behavior towards women. Any "break with tradition" such as a woman talking back (as illustrated in both plays) or deciding to end a relationship (as evidenced by the Moremogolo girls whose ex-boyfriends demand sex from them even after the relationship has ended) becomes the basis for perpetuating violence. Most importantly, the combination of tradition and the changing positions of women (such as being educated and earning more money) partly contributes to violence against women and to intimate partner homicides, both in reality and as portrayed in the two performances. While a direct link between poverty and domestic violence is observed, with economically-dependent women accepting their subordinate roles and having a higher tolerance to violence, those women who are more economically independent still become victims of femicide when they try to challenge or resist their partner's domination. This, therefore, points to different means by which tradition and modernity combine to marginalize women of different classes.

The complex relationship between class, tradition and violence becomes evident in the stigma attached to abused women, especially those who are young and educated. It is this stigma that in part drives the young girls of Moremogolo to keep silent about the

assaults and sexual exploitations from their ex-boyfriends. Additionally, in the words of Neo Thema, an educated, middle-class, publicly self-declared victim and survivor of domestic violence, there is need to "get over the cultural stigma because when a woman speaks about such issues [of gender-based violence], she is looked at with a different eye." Writing about the situation in North America, Meyers observes that this stigma is entrenched in social myths and stereotypes, including the belief that intimate partner violence (IPV) is the fault of the victim. In Botswana, a number of reasons are used to assign blame to the victims of IPV and to explain why their partners were provoked to beat or kill them. These reasons include women leaving their partners, cheating on their partners, over-spending, talking back and "refusing with the blankets"[52]. These behaviors are at odds with the paradigmatic expectations of a "good wife" embedded in customary models of gender. Afraid of being labeled "loose," most victims suffer in silence.

This silence is captured in psychologist Dana Jack's *Silencing the Self* (STS) theory. Based on research on depression in women in different contexts, the theory postulates that "women adopt a self-silencing schema based on social expectations that dictate that they must silence certain thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in order to create and maintain safe relationships" (Ali, Oately and Toner 671). Applied to three groups of women outpatients (undergraduate women, mothers who abused drugs and who had young children, and a battered women's shelter group), the theory demonstrates the psychological effects of self-silencing on women. Although individual women may view the process of self-silencing as personal, practitioners of STS argue that the process has deep cultural roots. Self-silencing thus becomes a construct of the patriarchal norms and

[52] This phrase has the same connotations as "fetching water for your husband," which means that a wife should always give in to her husband's sexual demands.

values that dictate how women should behave in intimate relationships. According to Jack, women's continued self-monitoring towards conforming to such socio-cultural dictates gives birth to "arguments between the "I" (a voice of the self) and the "Over-Eye" (the cultural, moralistic voice that condemns the self for departing from culturally prescribed 'shoulds' " that in turn yield depression. It is this pressure to avoid shame and stigma by conforming to socio-cultural prescriptions of a good woman/wife that forces women to engage in self-silencing so as to preserve relationships. They do this by outwardly portraying a compliant and content self (contrary to how they inwardly feel) even in the midst of abuse and violence perpetrated against them. The study reveals that self-silencing is more common in battered women and less in undergraduates. What is observed in the case of Botswana is that, as the theory posits, most abused women suffer in silence because of multiple reasons, such as stigma, financial dependence and poverty. Unfortunately, the self-silencing, which is intended to avoid/prevent violence, actually escalates the violence to the point of murder: the so-called "passion killings".

I maintain that the term "passion killings" is equally a cultural construct that de-genders the gender-based-violence, as it obscures the male-centered expectations of the women who choreograph these killings. The label "passion killings" is therefore a discourse that serves and maintains this patriarchal view of women: it absolves the perpetrators (men) of responsibility by suggesting that they are overcome by passion and therefore are not in control of their actions. It is because of this critique that I use the term in quotation marks throughout this dissertation.

As I mention above, stigma is one of the reasons that women adopt self-silencing as a survival mechanism in the midst of violent relationships that eventually end in

"passion killings." Stigma in Botswana is entrenched in a general myth and tendency to associate "passion killings" with people of lower status. For instance, one newspaper article writes about a shocking incident whereby the perpetrator is a respected councilor in the ruling party, Botswana Democratic Party. The councilor is described as "a humble person who was slow to anger." Yet another newspaper portrays the victim as "a promising young university student who was engaged to her perpetrator" (Exner and Thurston 9). By focusing on the shock value revolving around those involved (perpetrator and victim) in the murder, there is an implicit dissociation of "passion killings" with people of a higher class and those who are educated. However, the young Moremogolo and YOHO girls, the victimized women portrayed in *Alcohol and Drug Abuse* and *The Flower*, and survivor Neo Thema are women who occupy different social positions; their combined experiences indicate that we must dispel this class-based myth, as they demonstrate the complexity of violence against women and show that it is an issue that cuts across social class.

A central cultural practice that positions a woman as her husband's property is that of *bogadi* (bride wealth/dowry), which is referenced in *The Flower*. Traditionally, *bogadi* was a gift in the form of cattle from the groom's family to that of the bride. The number of cattle given varies from one ethnic group to another. *Bogadi* was intended to acknowledge and thank the bride's family for raising and giving away their daughter. It also placed the marriage on firm ground, marking the beginning of a relationship not only between husband and wife, but also between their families and relatives. Like many cultural practices, *bogadi* has and continues to experience modern transformations. Though it is still practiced today, as Denbow and Thebe observe, it "has become more

commercialized, and some families have begun to demand a higher *bogadi* as compensation, especially if they have incurred greater costs in raising and educating their daughters" (137). Thus, to many, *bogadi* has moved from being a token of appreciation to being a commodity payment. Even though cattle are still regarded as more acceptable by most families, it is now acceptable to give *bogadi* in cash, further perpetuating the commodification aspect. As illustrated in a popular Setswana wedding song, *bogadi* has now come to represent a commodification of women:

> *Se nkgatele mosadi! ke mosadi wa dikgomo!*
> *O a rekwa! O a ithekelwa! O rekwa ka dikgomo!*
> Don't step on my wife! She is a woman of cattle!
> She is bought! You can buy one for yourself! She is bought with cattle!

This new interpretation of *bogadi* unfortunately now mirrors the earlier, over-simplified, reductionist colonial perceptions of this complex cultural practice: "As soon as a young man has earned enough by loyalty in the service of this father or another cattle owner, to justify his ability to manage on his own, he uses part of his possessions to *buy* a wife" (Lichtenstein and Spohr, in Denbow and Phenyo 77).

Interpretations of the *bogad*i system as the purchasing of a wife position women as the property of their husbands. Operating in this mindset, a man can "use" his wife in any way that pleases him, just as he would any of his other possessions. In the play, this male supremacy is evidenced by the husband's boastful statements "This is *my* wife!" and "I married her with ten cows." It is important to note that even though the amount of money or number of cattle acceptable as *bogadi* varies from one ethnic group to another, ten cattle (as mentioned in the play) is considered very expensive. *Bogadi* that expensive is usually willingly paid by a wealthy husband for various reasons: to assert his masculinity, to show love and respect for his wife (as suggested by the song), just to

show off or to demonstrate that he is capable of supporting his wife financially. In other cases the parents might demand a dowry of this size if they feel they have spent a lot of money in raising their daughter, especially when their child holds a degree. In such cases, the husbands become unhappy and bitter, and feel justified in being violent towards their wives because they have "bought" them, as implied by the song and the husband in the play. When the price of *bogadi* is determined by the educational attainments of the wife, what is observed is a situation where tradition and modernity combine to enhance the oppression of women.

Bogadi, as presented in the play and as practiced in past and present times, is implicated in violence against women. Even though *bogadi* traditionally represented what Nilsson calls a "family-related discourse" because of its function of bringing two families together, it is still to a large extent embedded with gender meanings and relations of gender-related power. Within this discourse, some men use *bogadi* to assign themselves power over their spouses. In this sense, *bogadi* dichotomizes gender in that there are different normative meanings associated with men and women in relation to the payment of *bogadi*. As the play demonstrates, these gendered meanings and relations include men's position as the heads of their households and the women's responsibility to bear children for their husbands. This dichotomizing aspect of *bogadi* is more explicit in the modern times. There are different gendered views of what *bogadi* now represents in a changing Botswana, following changes to the position of women in society. Male (mis)interpretations of this cultural practice take center stage in the play *The Flower*. When the wife attempts to challenge this power imbalance, to insert herself in the decision-making process by suggesting that they should start using condoms as protection

against AIDS as well as a method of birth control, she is harshly forced into silence. Enraged, the husband authoritatively threatens his wife as he charges towards her:

> You will melt in my hands! I *am* the man! I am in charge of the house, understand? *Ke poo mo lapeng* (I'm the bull in this house).[53] You question my lobola *(bogadi*)? We have four kids. Who said it was enough? You insult me!

Thus the wife's attempt at a discourse on equality, her challenge of skewed gender-related power, leads to her being battered and ultimately to her death. The husband's statement, "You question my lobola?" suggests the expectations associated with payment of *bogadi*: that a married woman's main responsibility is to bear and rear children. This bearing and rearing of many children becomes impossible in a changing society where women work. Unable to cope with such changes, some men feel threatened and resort to violence. The play critiques this equation of wifehood and motherhood with victimhood and directly addresses the men's state of powerlessness (i.e., when women challenge their authority and refuse to serve them) that drives them to batter and murder their spouses. After the realization that he has killed his wife, the husband laments, "…we feel unloved by our women. No one is helping us understand this nonsense of women's liberation! I'm afraid…the police are coming."

In order to help men to cope with the changing times in a modern Botswana, through the epilogue, the play responds to the husband's plea as it directly addresses the audience, thereby simultaneously implicating and inviting everyone in this struggle:

> There is a great need to liberate women from the chains of male oppression. The pain, the abuse they endure everyday as objects of men. To attain

[53]"*Ke poo mo lapeng*" is derived from the Setswana proverb "*Poo ga di ke kopanela lesaka,*" which translates to "There can never be more than one bull in one kraal." The proverb suggests that, as a male, the man has power over his wife and children, that he is the sole decision-maker in the home.

> this, we must involve the oppressors themselves—men—to raise awareness about their oppressive nature and tendencies because focusing on women only [at the exclusion of men], we make them more vulnerable, submissive while men become more aggressive to maintain their positions of power.

The play's direct engagement with the theme of "domestic violence" goes beyond a mere representation of the issue: it uses a framework that blames and critiques all actors (women as victims, men as perpetrators, family as enablers, the audience and society as the socio-cultural structure) involved in the perpetuation of the problem. The play uses a combination of gender and socio-cultural structures to assign blame. This approach is in sharp contrast to Moremogolo's play on alcohol, which seemed to primarily blame the victim, and also alcohol as an outside factor.

Dramaturgically, *The Flower* uses a character with multiple roles of a joker/facilitator/narrator who continuously engages the audience in the performance by using the "stop and start" method, which employs "cut-off" points during critical moments of the play such as when a character is in a predicament.[54] The "stop and start" positions the play dramaturgically as being less didactic than the Moremogolo play. For instance, the audience is implicated and urged to act (both in reality and in the performance) at the beginning of the performance by the narrator's animated statement: "There are those people among us here in this theatre, who make things happen (he pauses, looks accusingly, directly into the audience before pacing from left to right and back; the audience responds in a long silence of anticipation)! There are those who let things happen (spreading out his hands to show emptiness). Then there are those who just

[54] The "stop and start" system uses "cut-off" points as a way of involving the audience in what is taking place on stage. For instance, the facilitator/joker can freeze the actors when one character is faced with a dilemma. The facilitator/joker then asks the audience to either debate the issue or give the character advice on what he/she can do.

sit and wonder, 'Oh! What just happened?'" (folding his arms). Audience members respond differently to this accusation. Some exchange looks of nervousness and curiosity, while others are quick to respond with laughter and an assured, loud, "Yes!" Yet another member shouts, "Tell them!" clearly dissociating himself from the last statement. This accusatory opening discourages the audience from passivity, not only as audience members, but to a large extent as members of their society as well. The facilitator invites and prompts the audience to critically think about their roles in all that happens to and around them. Consequently, I read the varied audience responses as spontaneous embodied reflections of how individual audience members place themselves within the spectrum (those who silently let things happen, those who let things happen and complain later, and those who make things happen). By extension, embodied and verbalized reactions of nervousness and "Tell them!" to the facilitator's prompt indicate audience members' self-examination of their positions/roles.

Although it is clear that the performance in many ways sympathizes with the abused women and is geared toward fighting violence against women, it nevertheless reprimands all involved in the continuation of domestic violence.

Women/victims

"*He loved me because he gave me flowers*"

The play openly critiques abused women for the role they play in perpetuating their own mistreatment by continuing to stay in abusive relationships and making excuses for their abusive spouses. For instance, in the performance, even though the husband repeatedly batters his wife, the wife forgives him every time he gives her flowers. According to her, flowers denote love: "He loved me because he gave me flowers." In

another incident she says, "I know he must be sorry because he gave me flowers," once again justifying to the audience why she has again made peace with him. The audience is evidently fed up with the wife's delusional character, as evidenced by responses such as "*owaii*…!" (Argh..!). At this moment, the joker/facilitator comes to the audience's rescue, saying: "Yes, she got the flowers today. How can you advise her?" In this way, the facilitator is productively allowing the audience members to verbalize their opinions and mixed emotions of empathy, anger and irritation at the wife's gullibility and stupidity.

By employing Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques of the "joker" and "spect-actor," the performance continuously affords the audience an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and personal identifications with the issue represented on stage, as they are turned into simultaneous spectators and actors (spect-actors). Although audience members do not actually leave their seats to go on stage and act out their suggestions, the facilitator/joker's use of "simultaneous dramaturgy" allows the audience members to participate by making suggestions for the relevant actors (in this case, the abused woman) at crucial moments of oppression.

Additionally, the technique introduces a dialectical energy into the audience responses, as evidenced by different reactions. One man, throwing his arms in the air as a sign of irritation, impatience and dismissal, responds "*Nxa!*[55] *Yo o talela batho, mo reye a mo tlogele!"* (This one is disrespecting us and wasting our time, tell her to just leave him). A woman interjects, "*O a mo rata, mo tlogele…ga a itire*" (She loves him, so leave her alone…she cannot help herself). I argue that these different responses are not made in a vacuum; rather, they are informed by their executors' identities, which bring with them

[55] "*Nxa*!" is an expression of disrespect and anger.

a series of shared cultural interpretations as well as their individual "life experiences, knowledge and expectations" (Ebewo and Mmila 86).

Even though I know nothing about this man or woman apart from their social identities as audience members at the performance event, my insider-outsider formation (a researcher familiar with the culture within which the performance, performers and audience exist) allows me to make some inferences, partial as they may be. I observe that the man's statement, "This one is disrespecting us [the audience]," actually echoes the husbands' abusive statement to his wife during one of their fights: "You disrespect me…you will melt in my hands!" This statement, coupled with the wife's declaration, "But if I leave, what will I do? I'm afraid of him, I'm scared to leave," can be linked to and informed by the broader patriarchal and unequal gender role system in Botswana. This ideology of male supremacy has and continues to relegate women to a subordinate role. Consequently, in Botswana, "respect for women in any relationship with men is lopsided in favor of men and has led to abuse of women, including intimate femicide" (Alao, 311). Thus, this male audience member uses the same tone used by the husband: talking down to a woman. At the same time, by uttering, "Tell her to just leave him," the male audience member is siding with the woman character against the abusive husband.

Although the male and female responses may appear dialectical, they both point to the larger gender and socio-cultural norms and beliefs that actually shape these responses. The woman's statement, "She can't help herself" hints at the aforementioned psychological causes and effects of self-silencing on battered women: continued self-monitoring to please a partner and preserve a relationship. Similarly, the male audience's response "Just tell her to leave him" is oblivious of the psychological effects of the

violence on women that make it harder (contrary to the man's suggestion) for women to leave their abusive husbands. As Jack and Ali reveal in their various investigations, "higher levels of self-silencing have been found to be associated with variables representing inequality, oppression, and other threats to self and relationships" (7). In Botswana, this inequality is entrenched in gender and in the cultural definitions of a "good woman" referenced in the *The Flower*, against which the battered woman judges herself, further entrapping herself in violence and eventually death.

Therefore, both the woman and man's responses (by insinuation and out of obliviousness, respectively) reveal the often-overlooked gendered cultural factor as a primary reason why women continue to stay in abusive relationships: women are socialized to accept their inferior status in society and their subordination to men. This socialization is realized in the woman's statement in defending the wife: "She loves him, so leave her alone." Evidently the female audience member identifies with the wife and also believes that because the wife loves her husband, she should endure the abuse. Equating love with endurance is a discourse that justifies death in the name of love/passion. It is perhaps this social understanding of love that gave birth to the label "passion killings. Psychologically, this labeling is a manifestation of how women secure intimate relationships by sacrificing their needs and safety for those of their loved ones, and is a legitimation of the perception of women as being naturally self-sacrificing (Jack and Ali, 6).

In critiquing women for their contributions to their own abuse, although silent on the psychological aspects, the play explicitly acknowledges and links the problem of

violence against women to larger conservative cultural norms as evidenced by the play's epilogue, given by the same man who gave the prologue:

> You will agree with me that we have a problem of domestic violence perpetuated and caused by the existing inequalities in our society. What makes a man? How does a man behave? What makes a woman? A man is told not to cry, not to show his emotions. A woman is told, "*ngwanaka, monna ke tlhogo ya lolwapa*/my child, the man is the head of the family."[56] But for how long are we going to allow these negative stereotypes to build negative attitudes towards relationships?

The epilogue is an explicit diagnosis of the society as male dominated to the detriment of females and to children who are often orphaned by femicides because the man either commits suicide or is imprisoned for life. More importantly, the epilogue challenges patriarchal norms and is an invitation to men and women to change the situation. The speaker asks the audience to consider how the categories of male and female are constructed in Setswana. One possible solution to this problem comes in the form of a song, sung by a young woman, Enigma, offering a woman's perspective and role in producing a "real" man. The song is titled "How to Raise a Man":

> It takes a whole village to raise a child
> So let's all congregate to raise a man in this world
> They say it's a man's world
> But it's nothing without a woman from conception to construction…
>
> CHORUS:
> Raise a man, not just a mere man.
> Teach a man principles and values of life
> So he can never fail, so he can make a change

[56] This is stated during the counseling ceremony discussed above. The bride is told this by older married women while the husband similarly hears it from elderly married men.

As I walked through the valleys and shadows of GC [Gaborone City]
I came across an old woman and I asked her this question:
“Grandma, how do you raise a man?"
And she said, “let me tell you child”,
Raising a man is like weaving a basket
You take extra care to make a master piece of tapestry
Selecting the suitable fabric, interlacing…

They say a real man never cries or show emotions
I say raise a man who never lies but shows devotion
To his beliefs, aspiration, inspirations
Who is not narrow minded and stereotyped
And thinks that to show strength is to raise a hand to his partner
Leave her blue black like iodine
A man who shows respect and understanding that
Communication is the best way to solve a case

Through the song, the young woman, Enigma, locates the abuse of women in the gendered Setswana tradition that endows men with power over women. She challenges and negotiates this patriarchal construction of masculinity that dictates that men should not show emotions, yielding misconceptions about power as being only of a physical nature. Thus, while she blames men for mistreating their partners, she recognizes that men are also products of the same socialization. In this regard, her position resonates with those of African feminist scholars such as Ardnt (2002) and Nnaemeka who believe in communal spirit and complementarity, and appeal to men’s solidarity in fighting cultural and social discriminations that are oppressive to both genders.

In Enigma's eyes, just as the abuse of women is rooted in the patriarchal Setswana system, the solution to the problem also lies in those positive aspects of the Setswana culture. In particular she calls upon communality spirit, which is captured by her opening line, a general African saying: "It takes a whole village to raise a child." The proverb reflects a communal social responsibility to be involved in rearing children that is practiced by many African societies: a concept that African feminist scholar Oyewumi calls co-mothering. In this practice, the conduct of a child is everybody's concern, not just that of his/her biological parents. Any adult has the right to rebuke and discipline a misbehaving child before telling his/her parents, who would in turn carry out their own punishment. This practice is driven by the concern for the moral well-being of the entire community.

While Enigma proposes a communality framework for raising a "real" man, she also illuminates the significant role of the woman and of the home by extension, in this nurturing process. She dismisses the belief in male supremacy ("this is a men's world") by countering with the argument that "the world is nothing without a woman," as she points to a woman's nurturing role within the home as the first space of socialization. By seeking an old woman's advice, she is acknowledging and repositioning the woman as the knowledge-producer. In particular, she points to one of the sites where women's knowledge is located: basketry, a knowledge system that, together with its practitioners, is often "banished to the periphery of 'real knowledge' " (Nnaemeka 7).[57] By likening the

[57] Basketry, produced by women, is one of the surviving crafts in Botswana. Traditionally, baskets performed a wide variety of agricultural and household functions. These included large grain storage baskets (*sesigo*/ *sefalana*), baskets used for sifting traditional beer (*metlhotlho*) and small ones uses for storing grains in small quantities (*ditlatlana*). Their colors and shapes were largely influenced by their function. As a craft (like many other) that is unstable and responsive to change, over the years the weavers have incorporated new designs and materials to fulfill contemporary utilitarian and capitalist functions.

raising of a "real" man to the weaving of a basket, "where suitable fabrics are interlaced…" I argue that Enigma is illuminating the complexity involved both in basket weaving and in the rearing of children, both of which are predominantly women's spheres. This complexity is adequately captured by Botswana historians Denbow and Thebe:, "the intricate abstract designs they produce require considerable geometric calculation to produce symmetrically, and many of them are reminiscent of the beaded aprons worn in earlier times" (82). By pointing to this site, Enigma is repositioning women weavers within gender politics as what Collins refers to as "non-academic intellectuals": illiterate women who possess a wealth of knowledge in various sites outside the academy.

Thus, through the song, the performance is participating in a discourse that challenges through negotiation. It does this by critiquing the negative aspects of Setswana culture that are detrimental to women and promoting positive practices that benefit not just women, but the entire actual and imagined community.

Families/interventionists/enablers

"*I wanted to leave him, to file for divorce, but my parents, my own family couldn't allow it.*"

The play offers for consideration how the audience, women victims and cultural factors and institutions (such as families) individually or jointly perpetuate domestic violence. As already discussed, in most African societies family is the first step in the traditional conflict resolution process in marriage. This concept is what the family relationship discourse in *bogadi* is built upon. That is, the institution of *bogadi* marks the beginning of a relationship between the two families. The families, from then onwards,

cooperate closely in resolving disputes between the husband and his wife. In the traditional relationship discourse *bogadi* was meant to have a steadying effect on the marriage. These family interventions stem from the Setswana belief that communication, not violence, is the first step towards conflict resolution. This belief is expressed in the saying, "*ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo*" (the biggest fight/battle is fought through the mouth). Enigma's line, "communication is the best way to solve a case" is derived from this belief that encourages peace. Perhaps it is this belief that has for so many years earned Botswana the label of "nation of peace"; in 2010 the Global Peace Index ranked Botswana as Africa's most peaceful country.

While family interventions promote peace and steadiness in the marriage, they can pose as a threat to those on the receiving end of domestic violence, usually women. This is because in addition to the Setswana belief in peaceful conflict resolution, traditionally divorce was not acceptable and was more shameful for women as they would be seen as failures. This double yoke puts pressure on the families, especially the wife's, to exercise all possible pressure to avoid divorce as this would mar their dignity. In particular, it is the mother of the wife who is usually blamed for failing in her duties of raising a "good" wife. For instance, in the performance, when the wife challenges her husband's authority, the husband constantly blames his wife's mother for not teaching her that *he* is the head of the family, as shown by these insults: "Who was your mother? She never taught you the value of a woman? Who was she?" As a result of this double pressure of peaceful conflict resolution and divorce as failure, the victims have to pay the price of domestic violence, as evidenced by the wife's statement, "I wanted to leave him, to file for divorce, but my parents, my own family couldn't allow it."

Through the wife's words, the performance critiques families who fail to realize when situations are no longer conducive and safe for family interventions and peaceful resolutions. I argue that the criticism is a direct call to spouses' families to exercise "*ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo"* with caution and sparingly in the face of domestic violence. Failure to do so may only further imprison women as victims of femicides.

The Play's Relevance

As I watch the performance, I am particularly curious about the audience's generally passive response to the wife's detailed account of her gruesome murder at the hands of her husband, during which he ripped her heart and lungs out. In order to specifically satisfy my personal curiosity and my research inquiry, I take a moment to casually chat with Katlo Kerebotswe (a distant young relative who resides in Peleng) and two of her friends, Moroba and Lesego, after the performance:

PABALELO: Let us talk about *The Flower.*

KATLO: (casually) *rona mma re bona one hela ao. A o nyetswe a ga o a nyalwa. Ba setse ba tla a re tshabisa nyalo."* (This [violence] is exactly what we have to deal with, married or not. They will make us fearful of marriage.)

PABALELO: Why was everyone so calm at the details of the murder?

MOROBA: (freely, without hesitation) *Rona re setse re tlwaetse mmaago wena, mo ke dinyana! E setse e le khompetishene hela. A ga o itse gore yo mongwe o kile a gabolola ngwanyana mapele a sena go mmolaya, a bo a a phuthela ka polaseteke a isetsa mmago ngwanyana a re ke seshabo*?"(We have gotten used to it [the brutal murders], this is nothing! It has now turned into a competition. Don't you know that one [man] once dissected his girlfriend's private part after killing her, put it in a plastic bag and took it to her mother and told her he had bought her some meat?)

KATLO: (Interjects) *kana yo mosadi e bile o botoka ka gore o ne a nyetswe. Akanya rona ba re sa nyalwang! Motho a go ketekela fela gore o go rekela phenti, phenti hela ya mma-phenti! Ke gore e tshwanentse go nna "ee rra" nako tsotlhe. A re tla kgona? Okhokho![58]...Nnyaa mma gompieno YOHO e tsene mo dikamoreng tsa rona.* (The wife [in the play] is better because she was married. Imagine some of us who are not married! Someone brutalizes you just because he buys you a panty, a mere panty (putting all her right hand five fingers together and jolting them in a circular motion repeatedly—trivializing the worth of a panty—to which we all laugh.) You now have to continuously say, "Yes sir, yes sir," (bowing her head down with her palms alternatingly tightly hugging each other with every bow she makes at each utterance of "yes sir", gesturing submissiveness.) Will we manage? No! I assure you: today YOHO has really entered our bedrooms (clapping her hands in emphasis).

The play is successful in its complex engagement with the theme of domestic violence as a relevant social problem that affects everyone in modern Botswana: the victims (women), perpetrators (men), their children and families, and society at large. Thus, as evidenced by Katlo's statement, "Today YOHO has really entered our bedrooms," there is a direct connection between domestic violence as a representation on-stage and as a reality off-stage. By exposing the private home, the "bedroom" in particular, as a site of violence, YOHO highlights popular theatre's alienation effect: "to confront audiences with issues they are well aware of, but do not verbalize or act out in the presence of each other" (Johansson 127). No doubt, the Peleng residents are well aware of not only the gender-based violence, but also of the various brutal ways in which it is carried out. This claim is evidenced by the audience's passive reaction to the wife's

[58] "*Okhokho*" is an expression of diminution and refusal

narration, and further substantiated by Moroba's explanation of the passivity as well as her own account of the violence. Most importantly, YOHO's manner of representation (inviting the audience to think with them in transforming the situation) allows for discussions such as the one described above.

YOHO presents this theme as a problem rooted in the constructions of masculinity and femininity in Setswana traditional culture. By placing domestic violence within the patriarchal framework, YOHO aptly genders the problem. This patriarchal framework is realized through a combination of factors: the victims, the perpetrators, commercialized *bogadi*, families of the spouses and the society at large. Through *The Flower*, YOHO implicates all of these factors—operating under the broader socio-cultural structure—for their contributions in perpetuating domestic violence. I argue that while the play recognizes some cultural factors as threats to the well-being of women, it nevertheless fails to propose an obliteration of the entire culture. Rather, if offers a more productive engagement of the positive elements of the culture, collaboration and communality, as suggested by Enigma's gestured locking of hands as she says, "let's all congregate to raise a man in this man." This spirit of collaboration is also empowering to women as it recognizes their significant role in the home and in the society. In light of the above, I argue that through *The Flower*, YOHO addresses the root cause of the problem.

In addition, YOHO strategically type casted its actors: the joker/facilitator character that engages and constantly directly implicates the audience is played by a man. The husband and the wife represent the perpetrator and victim, respectively. Both the prologue and epilogue, which directly call the patriarchal culture into question for authorizing men as superior to women, is given by a man. Then, the last song, which goes

a step further to propose the solution to the problem, is performed by a young woman. I argue that this strategy uses men to acknowledge that they are beneficiaries of the patriarchal structure and that they can use their power positively to solicit change from others of the same gender. This strategy fulfills popular theatre's basic idea of empowering vulnerable groups by involving all concerned "including those who cause the crisis and pose the risks" (Johansson 48). It is therefore more fitting that a call for the reconsideration of the patriarchal culture is made by a man. Even more powerfully, it is the woman who strategically first shows how men are also oppressed by the same structure, which dictates that they should not show emotions. After revealing men as victims, she then lures them into collaborating with women to change the situation. She is the one who describes how she imagines that change. In this way, while the performance allows for different interpretations of the issue, it centers on women's perceptions of their own situations.

By using this strategy, particularly by having the song come last, the performance disrupts the simplistic oppositional binary of victimhood/agency often used to describe women in violent situations. Enigma's lyrics, which map the road for change, make her an agent of change. By portraying the wife as a victim and Enigma as an agent of change, the performance demonstrates the complexity of women and their situations, showing that they can be both victims and agents.

This complexity of women and their issues is also captured by YOHO's use of a thematically relevant issue that cuts across ethnicity, geographic location, age and class; it is an issue that cuts close to the bone for many women in Botswana. However, the use of the flower as a symbol of love is derived from western/modern traditions, and is

therefore foreign to the older and traditional women in rural areas. By using an exclusive symbol to portray an all-inclusive theme, I argue that YOHO does not cast gender-based violence as mapped by oppositions of traditional/modern, rural/urban or illiterate/educated. Rather, it goes beyond these dualistic discourses that assume that the modern, urban and educated are necessarily progressive and better than the traditional, rural and illiterate. As Miruka observes, in such discourses the modern is associated with freedom and economic empowerment, in sharp contrast to economic dependence, lack of freedom, wife-beating and so forth (50). Consequently, the rise of gender politics in Africa generally follows this dualistic practice. The play presents a much more dynamic view of the Botswana experience, where wife-beating can happen to women occupying both sides of these dualities, as Exner and Thurston point out.

As the performance demonstrates, domestic violence is a relevant theme even to women associated with progression: young, modern and relatively educated women in urban spaces. Interestingly, the play presents a young modern couple practicing and being affected by the interplay of traditional and modern practices and forces that sometimes contradict each other and yet at other times are in concert with the marginalization of women. These include traditional patriarchal beliefs that place a man above a woman as well as modern ways of expressing love through buying and giving flowers to a woman. While it might be tempting to designate these contradictions as irreconcilable, I borrow Nnaemeka's phrase, "tensions of mutuality" (3) to argue that it is these contradictions and tensions that breathe life into domestic violence. For instance, while the husband perpetually verbally and physically reminds his wife of his traditional superior position in the home, he uses flowers—a supposed modern symbol and gesture of love—as a way of

luring his wife back into his possession and abusive hands. This demonstrates how some modern, urban Batswana men juggle these extreme systemic contradictions to their advantage.

I argue that the two plays by Moremogolo and YOHO address a common theme about different forms of domestic violence. This theme, as already discussed, poses a threat to the social well-being and security of most women in Botswana, cutting across class, gender, ethnicity, geographic location and age, permeating all levels of society. As the 1999 Report on the Study of the Socio-Economic Implications of Violence Against Women in Botswana states, this multi-faced issue not only creates fear and insecurity in women's lives, it also "…restricts movement, infringes on their economic independence, and their poverty; denies their right to personal development, growth, security, respect and dignity; and exposes them to sexual exploitation, STDs (particularly HIV/AIDS), and unplanned pregnancies" (xiii).

Read together, the two plays go beyond the universality of the problem to underscore the complexities and heterogeneity of women and their experiences with domestic violence. As a subtext, Moremogolo's play is a representation of the effects of domestic violence on unemployed, older and married women residing in mining towns. As the play depicts the impact of domestic violence (resulting from alcohol abuse), coupled with that of residing in a mining town, are more significant and detrimental for the girl child who becomes an object of sexual exploitation by older men. YOHO on the other hand presents the fatal effects of domestic violence on modern, younger and relatively educated married women in urban centers. In this regard, by demonstrating the inclusive nature of domestic violence and the dynamic Botswana experience, the two

plays defy the postulated straightjacketing oppositional binaries discussed above, as they succinctly affirm Nnamemeka's argument that a gender analysis of patriarchal and imperialist structures shows how women's experiences simultaneously affirm and disrupt such structures.

However, the two plays employ different approaches. I argue that these approaches are largely influenced by *the* voice behind the story, a subject that I will discuss in detail in the next chapter. Moremogolo de-genders the theme by blaming outside factors (in this case, alcoholism), as suggested by the visually omnipresent banners and the motifs of the play. This, I argue, is a subtle and superficial engagement with the bigger problem that serves to blame the victims. In contrast, YOHO explicitly engages with the issue, underscoring its multifaceted manifestation as discussed above. It explores and calls out the various factors that cause domestic violence, demonstrates the effects of and direct connection between intimate partner homicides and domestic violence, and solicits and offers possible solutions and hope in the face of hopelessness. Additionally, the last solution is inclusive: it appeals to all genders and ages and is rooted within the Setswana culture of communality. As such it extends a number of African feminist propositions such as that of aligning the empowerment of women with their specific cultures and not within a cultural void. By offering a possible solution to the problem, the approach further fulfills the demands of African feminism as defined by Ardnt, who writes:

> As a rule, African feminists do not stop at the criticism of patriarchal structures, but also discuss alternatives to what is criticized. They discuss the scope of action and alternative perspectives for women which might help

overcome their discrimination and oppression. In doing so this, they attempt to identify traditionally proven ways as well as entirely new alternatives (77).

The strength of YOHO's approach (over Moremogolo's) in part lies in its dramaturgical representation and its multifaceted exploration of the theme. Through the use of "stop and start" and "cut-offs", the joker continuously engages the audience members and prompts them to demonstrate their knowledge. This method allows the audience to spontaneously respond to a situation or conflict on-stage while it is still fresh in their minds. By soliciting audience members' comments during moments of conflict, the joker accentuates the participatory element of popular theatre. He reminds each viewing audience member of "his or her double role as theatrical witness and social player in the communal events" (Johansson 128). This constant reminder is an element that promotes critical thinking and learning on the part of the audience. The performance thus takes the audience through a process of first reflecting on the reality of domestic violence, then to considering how the world should be, and lastly and most importantly to speculating about what people (individually and collectively) might *do* to change the situation. I maintain this approach empowers young girls like Katlo to acknowledge that the on-stage issue is part of their realities (an entry into their "bedrooms"), to also realize that their partners actions are wrong, and most importantly to understand that they should not succumb to such maltreatment, as suggested by Katlo's last question, "Will we manage?" She provides the answer to her own question in an embodied refusal, captured by "*Okhokho,"* which is an emphatic expression of both diminution (of the man's superiority) and refusal (to submit to his dominance). It is the joker's constant soliciting of the audiences' input that sparks such critical thinking during the on-stage performances as well as in the off-stage performances. In this way, popular theatre ceases

to be a mere pre-codified final product of the on-stage and becomes a "drama-in-the-process-of-making" (Kidd 275) both on- and off-stage.

In comparison, while Moremogolo's post-performance discussion approach is commendable, I argue that the facilitator falls short in taking advantage of the high energy and positive ambience he has elicited. The prompts he uses to engage the audience seem to emphasize the dangers of alcohol already established by the play, with the aim of invoking fear through testimonies of real people with actual negative experiences with alcohol. What he does not do is prompt the audience to critically think about *why* they abuse alcohol or about what they can *do* to solve the problem.

For instance, even when the female self-declared experienced drinker clearly states that she drinks when she is stressed, the joker does not encourage her to talk about some of the things that cause her stress. Given her flamboyant character, I have no doubt she would have shared this information, especially given the fact that she divulged how she got the scar on her face. In fact, "stress" is cited by many participants of the on-stage and off-stage as the reason why they drink. Even the male volunteer of the post-performance mentions that he realizes alcohol sometimes increases, rather than decreases, his stress level. Therefore, it would have been meaningful to focus the discussion and debate around this factor. Encouraging such trains of thought might have led to concrete suggestions for overcoming the stress and, in turn, stress-related alcohol abuse. With prompts such as "anything: a joke, a poem or a song that can critique alcohol abuse just like the play," I avow that the post-performance is more interested in depicting the reality and effects of alcohol abuse than how the situation can be changed. In fact, the solution is clear: quit drinking, convert to Christianity and you will have no stress, no problems. In

its entirety, the narrative seems to be aimed at reflecting the world of alcohol abuse: real people experiencing real effects of alcohol abuse. It appeals to people's emotions by evoking fear and sympathy rather than to people's intellect and how they can use it to transform their situations. In this way, the approach is limited in its ability to convince people that alcohol is dangerous.

The other way in which the YOHO approach is more meaningful than that of Moremogolo lies in its in-depth exploration of the issue of domestic violence. For instance, the solution and course of action offered in YOHO's play is presented from the perspective of a woman as a potential victim of domestic violence. Even more powerful is how the approach strategically complicates the cultural spirit of communality by navigating the same double-edged culture that some men exploit to oppress women. Through Enigma's voice, the performance uses the Setswana concept "*maloma a fodisa*" (the one that bites and soothes)—similar to Derrida's *pharmakon* (a drug that cures as it poisons)—to subtly challenge patriarchy as the fundamental cause of domestic violence from which passion killings originate. Before directly critiquing men who physically abuse women, Enigma strategically appeals to every member of society to join hands in creating a more hospitable environment for women, pointing out how men are also victims of patriarchy. Like the basket weavers about whom she sings, she creatively weaves into her song the wisdom and fundamental role of women in raising "real" men who treat their women with respect. In this way, the performance pursues a Setswana contextualized feminist agenda of restructuring the existing matrix of domination and overcoming it, thus improving the situation and well-being of Batswana women.

3. YOHO's *Don't Do That*: A Didactic and Limited Focus on the Effects of Alcohol Abuse

The performance takes place in an open dusty soccer field behind YOHO's offices in Gaborone West at around 5:00 p.m. I can see a large white roadshow truck that opens into a mobile stage, draped with a red velvet cloth. As already established, YOHO has a total of nine affiliate sites in all districts of the country: Letlhakane, Francistown, Selebi-Phikwe, Kasane, Lobatse, Hukuntsi, Ghanzi, Serowe and Gaborone. The roadshow truck connects and allows mobility between the sites. In order to draw a crowd, loud music is played from the truck, which is equipped with a PA system complete with a microphone, amplifier and loudspeakers. About two feet away from the truck are two black marquees printed with interesting beer-like bottles. Just like beer, the bottles have different images and names such as: "AIDS Dry: finest blend to quench your lust," "Rape Spirit: gives you 80% chance of rape," "Pregnancy Spirit," "HIV Beer" and "Accident Lager." Printed at the bottom of the marquee, is "For more information, please contact Ministry of Health," marking the connection between the performance's theme and that of Ministry of Health.

As people begin to gather around the marquees to look at the images, they are given promotional materials in the form of water bottles, key rings, pens and hats. The people's attention immediately shifts from the marquees as soon as a young, popular female musician, Slizer[59], (whom I had just recently heard of but never met) takes the stage. The crowd automatically rushes towards the truck to watch Slizer's performance. Standing, the audience forms a semi-circle around the performance. I watch in awe as almost

[59] Slizer, born Naledi Kaisara, is a well-known local artist whose popularity extends to countries like Zimbabwe and Nigeria, despite the fact that she sings in Setswana. She is Botswana's best-selling female dancer and singer. I think what makes Slizer so relatable to most youths in the country is that she is a single mother who sings in Setswana, and as one audience member at this performance says, "she doesn't behave like a celebrity."

everyone sings along. I seem to be the only who does not know the song. It is one of those moments when my outsider positionality is heightened: I feel ancient and out of touch! To make up for this, I join those dancing to the song. As soon as Slizer's performance ends, the director, Mandla Pule, announces the play, *Don't Do That.*

This is a play about a competition for John's body; the rivals are Anti-Retroviral therapy (ARV) and Alcohol. In the play, Alcohol is tired of people blaming him for their own irresponsible behavior. The play takes place at John's funeral. John finds out he is HIV-positive and is enrolled in ARV therapy. However, he does not commit to the treatment. Instead, he begins to drink heavily and, while doing so, verbally and emotionally abuses his partner, Tshiamo, and infects her with HIV. He eventually dies due to a damaged liver and his failure to adhere to the prescribed treatment. In ARV's words, "*John o ne a tagwa, John o ne a ntlhakatlhakanya le bojalwa. John o ka be a sa re tlogela fa a ne a ka bo a ntsere sentle jaaka ba bongaka ba mmoleletse."* (John was a drunkard, John used to mix me with alcohol. John wouldn't have died if he had taken his treatment just as he was instructed by his doctor).

Dressed in a simple black robe and a large silver cross around his neck, with "alcohol" written in white around his waist, Alcohol hijacks a funeral over which ARV is presiding. ARV's attire resembles that of Roman Catholic bishop vestments: a white alb with gold trimmings around the sleeves, a red velvet chasuble, a matching red velvet mitre with the letters "ARV" written in red on a white background trimmed with gold, a pectoral staff and a white amice with golden trimmings and a red cross at the bottom. The dominant red color can be interpreted as blood, the only way HIV is detected in the body.

In addition, the color red is associated with danger in Setswana. On the other hand, Alcohol's black robe represents the evils associated with alcohol.[60]

In the play, people are disgusted with Alcohol and they tell their individual stories about how alcohol has played a role in their heartaches. The phrase "don't do that" is a motif taken from Alcohol's repeated call to a blame shifting, asking people to stop blaming him for their irresponsible behaviors. In this way, the play encourages introspection by audience members.

DISCUSSION

This particular play was part of the YOHO National Theatre Competition/Festival held in Francistown on January 25, 2011. The play was developed specifically for the festival but was thereafter performed at different places in Gaborone, including the Goborone West performance described above. The theatre festival was organized and sponsored by YOHO and was themed "HIV and Alcohol." The goal of the festival was to "improve out of school youth knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding alcohol and HIV prevention" (Otukile, Personal interview). Nine groups (all affiliates of YOHO) from various parts of the country participated in the festival: Francistown, Gaborone (the group that I worked with), Kasane, Letlhakane, Hukuntsi, Selebi Phikwe, Lobatse, Serowe and Ghanzi.

Once again, there is a connection between Moremogolo's and YOHO's performances: while the former relates alcohol to domestic violence, the latter emphasizes the causal relationship between alcohol and HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, while Moremogolo use alcohol to assign blame, YOHO (through the character Alcohol) blames

[60] In Setswana (probably following colonialism), black is associated with evil and death. For instance when a mother loses a child, she wears a black head wrap (for a number of months) to show mourning. Similarly a widow wears black clothes for six to twelve months, depending on her ethnicity.

the drinker. Both Moremogolo's and YOHO's approaches have weaknesses and strengths.

Before I address YOHO's troubling moralistic approach, I would like to begin with its strengths. One of YOHO's strengths lies in going beyond the link between alcohol and HIV/AIDS to include and highlight the causal relationship between verbal and emotional abuse (as a form of violence) against women and AIDS. In this way it joins the few bodies of literature that directly link violence against women and HIV/AIDS in Botswana. In the available literature, the two themes are often discussed in juxtaposition as some of, if not the two, leading causes of death in Botswana. For instance, Jankey quotes the Minister of Labour and Home Affairs who, in giving a key note address at the 1st National Conference of Gender Policy and Programme Committee at the University of Botswana in 2001, "pointed out that violence against women and children, murders and HIV/AIDS are still on the increase in Botswana" (44). Other literature that comes close to linking the two themes includes a book, *Male Involvement in Sexual and Reproductive Health: Prevention of Violence and HIV and AIDS in Botswana* by Tapologo Maundeni, et al. Like Jankey, the authors of this book allude to the escalating rates of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS, arguing that they are in part due to the lack of men's involvement in issues of reproductive health. Likewise, Exner and Thurston in passing compare "the severity of passion killings to the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is currently affecting Botswana" (10).

The report on violence against women in Botswana is one of the few bodies of literature available on the causal relationship between HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence. As the report aptly notes, HIV/AIDS is in part caused by violence against

women in that it exposes abused and vulnerable women to sexual exploitation. I argue that by directly linking HIV/AIDS to gender-based violence, YOHO's play participates in and creates a space for a discourse that points to patriarchy as the overarching factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence.

Focusing on Southern Africa, Diana Russell (2001) links the two themes as she refers to AIDS as a mass femicide. She writes, "[…] husbands who are entitled by patriarchal law or custom to expect, demand and/or force their wives to engage in sex with them" (6). As shown by the play (where John and Tshiamo are not married) and by the Moremogolo's girls' on- and off-stage experiences of sexual exploitations from their boyfriends and ex-boyfriends, this entitlement is not limited to husbands but also extends to unmarried couples operating under the same male domination myth. As discussed earlier, commercialized concepts of *bogadi* and "*go ga metsi"* (fetching water) make some women vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because they feel obliged and bound by these concepts to be obedient to their husbands. Russel further observes that under this socio-cultural structure, women in Southern Africa generally find it difficult to negotiate sex; this issue is also portrayed in the play, *The Flower*. Women often find themselves risking infection to please their men. Russel argues that this "situation is part of our culture…and our culture is part of why HIV is spreading" (7). Thus, in the same way that cultural norms have been implicated in domestic violence, Russel similarly links HIV to the patriarchal culture. The latter is particularly true for women who are economically dependent on their men. In "The commercialisation of lobola in contemporary Zimbabwe: A double-edged sword for women," Takunda Chabata (2012) argues, like Russel, that commercialized *lobola* makes it difficult for some married women to

negotiate safe sex because the husbands often ask them, "*Dzakaenda dzakapfeka macondom here?"* (Did the cattle we paid go with condoms on?) (13). Thus *lobola* gives men sexual and/or physical power that they can exert to abuse women.

The impact of commercialized *lobola* on women of Southern Africa is further observed by *Sokwanele* (a Zimbabwean blog) in a May 24, 2012 article titled, "A gendered insight into the lobola debate."[61] The article equates the payment of *lobola* (generally in Southern Africa and specifically in Zimbabwe) with the payment for a woman's reproductive capacity, it buys her uterus. It argues that commercialized *lobola* usurps women's power and autonomy over their sexual and reproductive health in that, within the *lobola* discourse, a woman is perpetually consenting to sexual intercourse since her husband has purchased the right to demand sex from her at any time. In Setswana, this issue is captured by Head's line, "Daughter, you must carry water for your husband," which connotes fulfilling a husband's sexual demands and desires. According to Sokwanele, such thinking "has exposed many married women *to domestic violence, marital rape and HIV infection wherein the husband may hav*e extra-marital sexual partners, such as a small house, and demand to have unprotected sex with his wife" [my emphasis].[62]

In the Setswana context this masculinist ideology, which entrenches women simultaneously into HIV/AIDS and domestic violence in the form of femicides, is embedded in proverbs that perpetuate the man's dominant position over his wife,

[61] *Sokwanele* means "enough is enough" in Ndebele. It is a non-violence resistance movement committed to challenging and confronting all types of injustice. It is a people's movement (not affiliated with any political party) embracing supporters of all pro-democratic groups, organizations and institutions. It communicates with its supporters through a newsletter, blog and a website.

[62] The phrase "small house" refers to a woman with whom the man is having an extra-marital affair. In Setswana the "small house" stems from the expression "*noka e tlatswa ke melatswana*" (a river is filled by streams/tributaries), which suggests that a man cannot be fulfilled by his wife alone. This is a gendered expression exploited by cheating men to justify their promiscuous behavior.

authorizing his promiscuity. These include "*Monna thotse o a nama*" (A man has to spread just like a pumpkin plant). A woman on the other hand must conserve herself for her partner and cannot question his whereabouts. As evidenced in *The Flower*, if the woman (especially when she is financially dependent on a man) dares to challenge the man's authority by, for example, insisting on condom usage, she can be jilted, physically abused or even killed. This cultural ideology is partly accountable for the escalating HIV/AIDS infections in Botswana, which are primarily affecting women and girls. In the play *Don't Do That*, this behavior is expressed in John's introspective and retrospective speech, "I was busy with the fast life of Gaborone, I led a very promiscuous lifestyle, abusing alcohol, I got infected with HIV because I had unprotected sex with countless girls…" Thus, as already established, the play fills the gap in the literature on the causal relationship between domestic violence and AIDS.

Additionally, in a bid to increase community mobilization, dramaturgically, the play employs participatory aesthetics such as the "open up technique": a means of engaging the audience members and encouraging introspection, by constantly asking them questions. John accomplishes this when, for example, he addresses the audience thusly: "…*jaanong bojalwa ga bona molato, ke nna yo ke neng ke sena maikarabelo, ke nwa bojalwa, ke sa tseye dipilisi tsa me ka nako...bojalwa ga bo ise bo latele ope, ke rona re bo latelang ko dipotong le dibara*" (…therefore alcohol is not to blame, I am the irresponsible one, I abused alcohol, did not take my treatment as I was supposed to… alcohol never follows anyone, we are the ones who follow it at shebeens and bars). Through this statement, the play attempts to discourage the blaming of alcohol as an outside factor. Using the same "open up technique," Alcohol ridicules and solicits

(instead of offering) solutions to alcohol abuse from the audience: "Now I would like you to tell me what we should do to solve this problem…" In this way, the performance places the community at the center of the decision-making and developing a possible plan of action.

Despite these positive elements, overall, the play *Don't Do That* comes across as a didactic and superficial interrogation on many levels. Both the title and the ARV's lavish Roman Catholic bishop regalia serve as significant didactic engagement with the theme of alcohol abuse: the political and Christian moralistic voices that condemn those who depart from their prescriptions (i.e., those who abuse alcohol). I claim that this framing automatically leaves no room for negotiation or interrogation of the causes of alcohol.

The title, *Don't Do That,* becomes a salient motif throughout the performance. Pastor Alcohol utters this directive phrase seven times in the six-page script. Its emphatic tone is captured by the way in which it is written: in bold capital letters (**DON'T DO THAT**). For those watching the performance, the dictate is equally salient in how it is uttered and embodied: slow and firm enunciation of every word in the phrase, "Don't...Do…That!" The three words are connected by pauses: Alcohol pauses after saying each word. Additionally, every time the phrase is uttered, Alcohol is standing still, only moving to point a finger at the crowd at the funeral or at the audience.

Even though the performance claims (in the synopsis) to give "us an opportunity to do self-introspection and ask ourselves, *gore* who is to blame for the irresponsible behavior caused by alcohol abuse among youth in Botswana," This salient motif frames the performance as nothing but an imperative voice that condemns those who abuse alcohol. In this way, the motif contradicts the self-introspection that the play seeks to

establish. I claim that the motif frames the performance narrative as an official decree: an echo of the Alcohol Policy in Botswana, as I will discuss later.

Equally didactic are the Roman Catholic Church regalia and the general funeral scene with the two presiding pastors, ARV and Alcohol. In the addition to the visually extravagant church regalia, the performance is frequently punctuated with strong references to Christianity. For instance, in a scene where the deceased John erupts from a coffin, he leads the gathered crowd (which joins in in a chant) in prayer:

> *Jehova ke modisa wa me* (The Lord is my shepherd)
> *Ga nkitla ke tlhoka sepe* (I shall not want)
> *O mphudisa mo mafulong a matalana* (He maketh me to lie down in green pastures)
> *O kgogela ka fa metsing a a didimentseng* (He leadeth me beside the still waters)
> *O rodisa moya wa me* (He restoreth my soul)[63]
> Amen

The prayer is followed by Tshiamo's song, titled "*Jeso Jeso*" (Jesus Jesus). These references establish the performance as a moralistic voice that condemns those who depart from Christian values as sinners (drunkards). This on-stage performance is in concert with and substantiated by my off-stage observation: in all my encounters with Teko, herein acting as pastor Alcohol, he is always wearing a wooden rosary with a thick cross. I later learn that he is an active member of Chiro[64] in the Gaborone West branch of the Roman Catholic Church; the church is located about ten to fifteen minutes from YOHO offices. Given the joint dramatic scripting by YOHO members[65], Christian

[63] Translation taken from the Bible. (King James Version, Psalms 23).

[64] Apparently originating from Belgium (where it was/is a boy's organization), in Botswana, Chiro is a youth club (made up of both boys and girls) within the Roman Catholic Church. Guided by Catholic orientations, the club activities include youth camps, fund-raising, leading the church in music or sometimes leading the church service.

[65] When I started working with the group during the second week of January, they were in the initial stage of rehearsal. As I engaged with them through workshops and rehearsals, it became clear that the youth had a lot of input in the dramatic scripting: it was infused with their own personal experiences and those of their peers (shared with me in the off-stage performances discussed in Chapter One) as unemployed boys and girls. At the same time, just like the youth of Moremogolo, they had to conform to

norms—a historical legacy of colonial invasion—become the lens through which the judgment of individuals and society is passed, not just in this particular play, but in many others I observed at the YOHO festival. In these performances, Christianity is offered as a solution to the problem of alcoholism and HIV/AIDS. For instance, the Selebi Phikwe play is set in a church on Sunday where the main character, Moatlhodi, is giving a testimony about his life as an alcoholic. His life changes for the better after converting to Christianity as the pastor's wife states at the end of the play, *"...Ke a leboga ngwanaka, tshwarelo ya Modimo, tshwarelo ya Jeso…Ke gopola ba ba kileng ba angwa ke mogare, malwapa a a kileng a phirimelelwa sebakeng sa majalwa, re re morena Modimo a a phatsimisetse lesedi…Konokono ke gore o neele botshelo jwa gago mo go Jeso keresete*." (I thank you my child, may God forgive you, may Jesus forgive you…I want to remember all those that have been affected by the virus, all the families that have been hit by the dark clouds of alcohol, I say let God's light shine upon them…The main thing is to give your life to Jesus Christ). In yet another play titled, *Maitlamo* (Commitment), one sister (Ivy) likens her alcoholic sister's (Emma) behavior to Satanism and appeals to the church and Pastor Zangane to pray for her. In trying to "save" Emma, the pastor blatantly says to her, "…*fa o le mo go Morena Jeso ga go sepe se se thata, Modimo o rile ke one tsela, botshabelo jwa rona, thuso e e gaufi*…Amen" (…when you are in Jesus Christ, nothing is difficult, God said he is the only way, our shelter, the nearest help…). Hence, just like Moremogolo, the message is clear: your problems of alcoholism and HIV/AIDS are self-inflicted; see the light, accept Christian values and be free of problems. These

the larger narrative of the co-sponsor: the Government of Botswana. This is a narrative that condemns alcoholism.

preachy, solution-oriented, narratives become the standard against which those viewing the performances must judge themselves.

I posit that that it is not surprising that such condescending moralistic statements prompt dismissive audience responses, such as this one:

> Sitting to my right, in the second, right-hand row of the Phase V Centre Hall in Somerset, Francistown, is my colleague from the University of Botswana, a board member of YOHO. To my left and behind me are youths whose ages range between eleven and twenty-five. Given the reputation of the location (a rough and unsafe neighborhood), it is satisfying to observe how cooperative the youth are being in this hall. They all clap when the Selebi Phikwe performance is introduced. The performance opens with a hymn by the congregation at church, "*O a taela moya*" (The Holy Spirit is commanding me). As soon as the pastor's wife begins to speak (seemingly possessed by the Holy Spirit), "*Tshwa…tshwarelo ya Modimo*," (For. Forgiveness by God)[66], one young man says to his friend before storming out, "*Ija! Ija!*[67] *Ba abo ba simolola. Ba ba tshameketse ruri. O tla mpitsa ha ba tlhwaahala*" (Here we go again. These one are not serious. You will call me when they get serious).

This young man's verbal and embodied reaction to the performance suggests the perceived banality of the moralistic messages. Most importantly, it illuminates their ineffectiveness in thinking with the audience, and the inadequacy of didactic methods in promoting social change.

[66] Literal translation
[67] "*ija*" is an expression of surprise, anger, disappointment or irritation.

Furthermore, *Don't Do That* has weaknesses in terms of how it approaches the theme of alcohol in relation to AIDS. Even though it attempts to let communities take responsibility for their actions, the play remains superficial in addressing the root cause of the problem: why do youth abuse alcohol? The performance seems to focus on a technical solution to the problem instead of understanding why alcohol abuse exists in the first place. In particular, YOHO falls short of implementing one of the core principles of participatory approaches: community mobilization. Interestingly, this principle is cited by YOHO's website and by the executive director, Vuyisile Otukile, as its main focus and strategy. YOHO describes community mobilization as:

> […]a participatory process that increases a community's sense of ownership and collective efficacy. It is a transformative process, shifting a community from "recipients" or "beneficiaries" of "projects" to active planners and participants in the health and well-being of the community and its members. Community mobilization is a proven development strategy that has helped people around the world identify and address health care issues. To implement this proven strategy, with which YOHO has years of experience, YOHO integrates its activities with those of participating health districts in addition to supporting locally based youth groups to mobilize others to define and act upon their health problems. This is attained through mass reach activities and related reinforcement and communications activities.

The on-stage performance does not invite communities to define their problem. Rather, they are only invited to "act upon" their problems: a result-oriented approach. In this regard, YOHO falls into the very trap against which is has set out to fight, and places communities at the receiving end of the participatory process. In this way, by reducing the community's participation the performance eliminates the distinction between the

top-down communications of the Ministry of Health and popular theatre as practiced by YOHO.

In this performance, the major cause of the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youth in Botswana in general (since the play was performed in different places) is portrayed as alcohol abuse. However, the representation erases the youth's perspective on the matter. In particular, Alcohol makes a statement at the end of the play, "*goromente o dirisa madi a mantsi mo botsogong jwa lona go tlamela malwetsi a mantsi a a amanang le bojalwa*" (the government uses a lot of resources to mitigate your alcohol-related diseases). Without denying the high prevalence of alcohol consumption among the youth nor the resulting health and social impacts in Botswana, I cannot help but wonder whether the narrative presented on stage is a reflection of the community's reflection or a recurrence of a dominant national discourse. At the heart of the question is the notion of ownership in representation. As popular theatre scholars such as Mlama, Kerr, Kidd, and Mda rightly point out, it is vital that unless the group owns the problem or conflict raised, the issues will seem artificial. Mda writes that, otherwise, "they may be used as mere mouthpieces of ideas produced by others which mystify their reality and condition them to accept a passive, dependent, uncritical role in an inequitable social structure" (15). The question that remains is: from whose viewpoint is the narrative constructed? Ironically, the last statement made by Alcohol echoes the controversial 2008 Alcohol Levy in Botswana, which drives the imaginative "beer" names displayed by the Ministry of Health campaign.[68] Is this perhaps the dominant voice behind *Don't Do That*?

[68] Upon achieving independence in 1966, the Ministry of Trade and Industry formulated and proposed the National Alcohol Policy for Botswana. The policy is intended to address issues of alcohol consumption and abuse, both at individual and social levels. According to Pitso and Obot (2011) the policy recognizes the need to regulate the alcohol trade and to protect the rights of adult citizens of Botswana to

By implicitly supporting a levy that has been imposed by the President without meaningfully exploring the root cause of the problem (why youth indulge in alcohol) the on-stage narrative participates in what Nnaemeka calls an imposed silence. The narrative is lopsided if not questionable. In this way, the performance becomes a mere vehicle of the hegemonic national discourse that claims the right to empower and improve through silencing the youth as victims. Where, then, are voices of the spoken-for groups in this narrative?

A counter-discourse to this hegemonic discourse of the public sphere lies in the off-stage performances. From my workshops and pre-performance discussions with both the Moremogolo and YOHO members, it is clear that alcohol abuse is more deeply rooted than the on-stage performance suggests. At one of YOHO's pre-performances of *Don't Do That* in Gaborone West, as I am talking to one of the leading members of YOHO his smell and slightly slurred speech reveal that he is intoxicated. At first I am taken aback by this reality, which is highly contradictory to the on-stage representation made by the same individual. This situation demonstrates Goffman's theory of the "self" that compares the way individuals interact with each other. He argues that day-to-day human interactions resemble a theatrical performance comprising a front stage (what I herein call on-stage performances) where individuals put up false appearances to conceal their true feelings, and a backstage (what I call off-stage performances) that represents

purchase and consume alcohol in a safe and well-regulated manner. It also outlines the role of government in ensuring that vulnerable members of the community are protected against the impact of harmful use of alcohol. In presenting the policy draft to parliament in July 2010, the assistant minister of Trade and Industry, Mr. Maxwell Motowane, cited a number of health and social ills resulting from alcohol abuse. As way of redressing the harmful consumption of alcohol in Botswana, a number of interventions have been initiated. These include the 2008 Alcohol Levy proposed by the President of the country, Ian Khama. The President's proposal, which included the imposition of a 70% levy on alcohol products, sparked controversy. This levy was later reduced to 30%.

the real feelings. What does it mean when a slightly drunk youth is on stage trying to sensitize his fellow youths to the dangers of alcohol?

In a quest to answer this question, in our pre-performance discussion, I ask YOHO members about the Alcohol Levy and the excessive alcohol consumption occurring in Botswana. Their answers range from "some of us drink to escape the frustrations and realities of unemployment," to "we drink to socialize and have fun." In particular, the slightly drunk individual casually responds, "Just ask Kgosi Mosadi Seboko; alcohol is part and parcel of our celebrations."[69] In order to understand the context of his statement, I ask him to explain further, and he refers me to a newspaper article he read about the chief's position on alcohol. In the article, Kgosi Seboko, a guest speaker at the launch of Botswana Alcohol Industry Association (BAIA) in April 2010, argues that alcohol is:

> …not the creation of the youth, or modern society, traditional beer has been part of Setswana celebrations going back to the distant past […]. Its preparation is a ritual itself. For the best brew, only the very best sorghum is chosen...traditionally it is prepared by women...when it is ready to be served, there is ululation, song and dance (April 7, 2010).[70]

What the off-stage performances and the chief's statement reveal is a counter-discourse to the youth-blaming hegemonic discourse of the Alcohol Policy echoed by the on-stage performance of *Don't Do That*. Hence the off-stage, where discussions reveal the youth's hidden transcript, operates as an arena wherein the concerns and causes of alcoholism are explored from the perspective of the youth. I argue that the off-stage

[69] Mosadi Seboko is the chief of Balete ethnic group. Her ascension to chieftainship in January, 2002, was revolutionary because she was the first female to be ever coronated as a chief in Botswana, departing from a tradition where women were not allowed to speak in *kgotla* meetings, let alone be chiefs.

[70] BAIA is an association of major producers and distributors of alcoholic beverages in Botswana. It was formed in response to the alarming rate and spread of alcohol abuse and irresponsible drinking in the country. It is also possible that the association was formed as a strategic effort (on the part of the industry) to "support" the Alcohol Levy and hopefully minimize its stringent restrictions.

narrative begs for a much deeper (than what the on-stage displays) engagement with the problem of alcohol abuse in Botswana.

For instance, in order to fully grasp and define the dimensions of the problem, there is need for an in-depth exploration and consideration of Batswana cultural practices, beliefs and attitudes in relation to alcohol use. As kgosi Seboko and the tipsy young man aptly point out, because alcohol is a part of celebrations, it is considered by some people as food - particularly traditional beer or its commercialized version, *Chibuku Shake Shake.*[71] Both types of alcohol have sorghum malt as an important ingredient, hence the common reference to both types of beer (and the justification for drinking them) as "*mabele mabelega batho*" (sorghum, the carrier of people). This expression is used in the same way as "*mosadi thari ya sechaba"* (a woman is the cradle of her nation): both are suggestive of the supportive, protective nature and fundamental roles of sorghum (as part of Batswana staple food) and of a woman in Setswana.

Another aspect that hegemonic discourses and interventions need to consider, as is it actually contributes to the causes of alcoholism, is the economic impact of the Alcohol Levy on Batswana livelihoods. In presenting the Botswana Alcohol Levy at the Southern African Alcohol Policy Forum in November, 2012, Phenyo Sebonego of the Ministry of Health acknowledged that one of the challenges of the Levy is that some families depend on selling alcohol for their livelihood. Since sorghum production and traditional brewing go hand-in-hand, traditional beer and *Chibuku* provide a market for

[71] This is a popular beer found in Southern Africa. It is opaque, sold in a 1 liter carton with a fairly low alcohol content, ranging from 0.5% - 4% ABV. It is based on a traditional beer recipe made from sorghum (and maize in other countries). The "shake shake" part of its name is a directive since it has to be "vigorously shaken before drinking to remix the sorghum sediment that falls to the bottom" (Denbow & Thebe, 2006:117). *Chibuku* has now almost replaced the time-consuming home-brewed traditional beer. It is available almost everywhere, especially in unlicensed shebeens. As Denbow and Thebe note, because of its affordability it is stigmatized and associated with rural life and the lower classes.

Batswana small-hold farmers in general. Additionally, as kgosi Seboko, Roe, and Denbow and Phenyo rightly indicate, rural and lower class women—as traditional home brewers, suppliers and distributers of alcohol beverages such as *Chibuku*—depend on alcohol as a major source of household income. This claim is substantiated by one woman's angry comment on the *Masa-A-Sele* radio program on the morning of April 11, 2011: "…*jaanong rona ba re itshetsang ka bojalwa gatwe re dire jang? Bongwanake ba tla ja eng? Ke tla ba rekela yunifomo ka eng?"* (…so those of us who depend on alcohol for our day-to-day survival, what are we supposed to do?[72] What will my children eat? Where will I get money to buy their school uniform?). This was in reference to the proposed Traditional Beer Regulations to be enacted on December 2011: the Regulations contradict the Ministry of Health's acknowledgement of the economic benefits of alcohol to the poor. Under the new regulations, *Chibuku* and other traditional beers were going to be prohibited from being sold from households.

Therefore, as the caller and other *Chibuku* traders, Peter Moloise and Kasane Morolong reveal, while the Alcohol policy will improve the lives of some groups, it will increase the poverty of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups such as women sellers. Thus it is imperative that these cultural and economic dimensions are explored and taken into consideration so as to better inform the methodologies of educational programs and communication approaches such as popular theatre towards the prevention and control of alcoholism. It is in view of the policy's potential negative impacts that policy analyst Roe

[72] *Masa-A-Sele* which means "Morning has broken" is a popular phone–in morning program on Radio Botswana, the first radio station in Botswana. The radio station is non-commercial and uses Setswana language as the medium of communication. *Masa-A-Sele* is a program that discusses local current topics and invites members of the public to comment on the topics. On this particular day, the topic was the Alcohol Levy and callers were invited to share their views and offer alternative solutions to the problem of alcohol abuse.

adamantly argues that policies about commercialized beer in Botswana should rest on the commercial producer and not the government. His observation, made three decades ago, about a number of Botswana policies or programs "designed to assist both rich and poor will, if left undirected, help the rich more" (51) is shared by one angry *Chibuku* trader, Kasane Morolong, who laments that banning the sale of traditional alcohol from homes is going to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. He claims that "these [the rich] people have depots where they sell different kinds of alcohol and want us [the poor traders] to buy from their businesses." While I agree with Roe on the involvement of the affected groups, I acknowledge the need for government intervention. I argue that policies that drive performances about alcohol by popular theatre groups such as Moremogolo (as a named partner and beneficiary of the Alcohol Levy) and YOHO should rest on both the affected communities (as users and commercial producers) and the government. In turn, as bottom-up communication approaches and community mobilization interventions, the performances should reflect and focus on the views of communities as opposed to perpetuating the government's top-down narratives. The three performances analyzed here demonstrate how, popular theatre becomes a dual-edged entity that has the potential to liberate (as in YOHO's *The Flower*), or domesticate and mute marginalized groups' concerns and desires (as shown in the two alcohol performances). This paradoxical element of popular theatre will be further interrogated in the next chapter. Relevant to this chapter is the interrogation of how well the theatrical representations are representative of the communities' concerns. Whose stories are told on-stage? How are the communities' stories circulated within the parameters of popular theatre processes?

4. Summary: On and off-stage performances: different spaces same story

What the performances discussed above demonstrate that the two spaces are influenced by different power structures, hence the simultaneous connections, contradictions and tensions in the narratives told in the different spaces. According to the observed performances, the on-stage is in most cases either explicitly or implicitly scripted by the hegemony (such as the Ministry of Health in the case of the alcohol abuse plays) and is therefore not always conducive to a reading of what is regarded by the affected groups as a resistive space. This relegation into marginalization is what necessitates the comparatively safe space of the off-stage, which allows for hidden transcripts to be voiced and enacted; this, according to Scott, refers to subordinate groups' actions outside the observation and surveillance of the authorities.

I propose that in situations when popular theatre interventions (because of various circumstances) assume the position of 'speaking for'—such as when they name problems for the communities as evidenced in the explicit and implicit blaming-the-victim alcohol performances by Moremogolo and YOHO, respectively—the offs-stage sites become arenas where the subordinate communities can re-accord and re-position themselves as speaking subjects. Although the tendency is for some theatre practitioners (bound by funding agencies) to measure the success and efficacy of popular theatre by the final on-stage performances, I claim that this self-(re)positioning occurring in the off-stage remains within the parameters of popular theatre. Additionally, this tendency may calls for a reconsideration of the on-stage and off-stage performances within the principles of popular theatre in general and specifically in Botswana.

Like the other theorists and practitioners of popular theatre mentioned above, Conquergood theorizes that the critical component of popular theatre exists more in the process (off-stage) than in the final product (on-stage). I therefore use this principle to dissolve the apparent dichotomy between the off- and on-stage performances to argue that the two actually complement each other. In view of the epigraph of this chapter, coupled with Boal's assertion that "when someone speaks in your voice, even if it's an honest person, intelligent person, creative person, that person will never translate exactly what you want to say," I argue that popular theatre on-stage performances (as a supposed public transcript of subordinate communities) are more often than not only a partial representation of their realities, by virtue of being representations. Furthermore, because the performances are mainly influenced and governed by hegemonic power structures (men and the state as operators and funders of popular theatre, respectively) they do not always accommodate the perspectives of the subordinate. This points to the inherently problematic nature of representing, and speaking for, others. The limitations of external interventions necessitate the off-stage layer to gain access the subordinate discourses.

Whether these discourses connect with (such as in the case of YOHO's *The Flower*) or contradict the on-stage discourses, I argue that they influence and complement each other even as they create tensions. For instance, YOHO's and Moremogolo's on-stage performances of alcohol abuse focus on the effects of alcoholism, evidently from the perspectives of those in power: the Ministry of Health. What this narrative conveniently excludes—the causes of alcohol abuse—is verbally addressed and embodied in the off-stage spaces as discussed throughout this chapter. For instance, while the on-stage narratives blame alcohol and the victim, the off-stage conversations include

historical, socio-cultural and economic forces that relate to alcohol use and gender-based violence. Furthermore, the slightly drunk performer embodies the deep-rooted nature of the issue (equally requiring more profound solutions) as the situation points to the role of those in power in exacerbating the problem: the lack of rehabilitation and counseling services for the abusers. Hence, it is meaningful for popular theatre interventions to consider both the off-stage and on-stage spaces discourses whether they are in concert with or contradict one another. Perhaps the contradictions can evolve into a workable symbiosis for all involved: subordinate and hegemony.

While I acknowledge that the off-stage space is not completely free of evaluation and policing by the dominant groups, I proffer that it is the space that is most intelligible when trying to access the marginal discourses of abused women, unemployed men and women, men and women struggling with alcohol addiction, etc. Reading the two spaces together ensures a somewhat satisfactory participation and guards against usurpation of the voices of the marginalized. I am convinced that putting the two spaces in conversation will enable popular theatre interventions to include these voices in speaking up against problems they are faced with. This approach also resonates with the concept of self-representation and self-definition (captured by the chapter's epigraph) central to African and Black feminists, as proposed by scholars such as Modupe-Kolawole (1997); Nnaemeka (1997); Oyewumi (2003); hooks (1994); Lorde (1984); and Collins (2000). In writing about the dilemmas of African feminism, Nnaemeka cautions that:

> Speaking for others entails figuring out how to share the site of affliction with the "afflicted" and as defined by them without claiming the whole territory in order to articulate if *for* them and *on behalf of* them. Speaking for others (in the sense of speaking with) does not create absence and exclusion; rather, it ensures presence and participation (163).

Similarly, Lorde points out the need for and importance of self-defining as the first step towards the empowerment of those who stand outside the domains of power as she aptly argues, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (112). Thus in the alcohol-themed blame-the-victim performances, external definitions are not only limiting, but they also distort and misname as they only serve those who name and keep them relevant. As observed in Moremogolo's play, by blaming and punishing Sebaetseng, a victim of sexual exploitation and domestic violence embedded in gender imbalance, this narrative legitimatizes domination and control of women. As the young Moremogolo girls reveal in the off-stage conversations, girls and women in similar situations are relegated into fear, shame and silence. Lorde further argues that this fear "… keeps us docile and loyal and obedient, externally defined, and leads us to accept many facets of our oppression as women" (58).

I therefore submit that this process of self-naming is far too important to be left in the hands of the hegemony as it is instrumental to the creation of identity. In acknowledgement of the fact that the less structured "marginal discourses" of the off-stage do not always make it on-stage because of the governing power structures, I invoke this concept of self-naming. This concept is important because the role of women and other marginalized communities in popular theatre needs to be self-determined on an individual and collective basis that considers definitions of what is both beneficial and detrimental to their well-being. In order to access these definitions, it is necessary to focus on and read on-stage and off-stage performances in conversation with each other, as one story.

CHAPTER FOUR

State Funding and Popular Theatre: A Paradoxical Relationship

We watch in silence as our means of communication is torn into a message driven play. Our hard work of collecting information and observing the lives of the people we are going to perform for is reduced into nothingness. Consequently funders in general do not value the community's ownership and involvement in identifying problems, causes and solutions to the subject matter. This renders theatre into donor mouth puppets…

Mpho Rabotsima. (Personal Interview. December 3, 2010)

This chapter is an assessment of the role of funding popular theater in Botswana. Botswana support for theatre is articulated in the National Policy on Culture, which was established "to promote our pride and nationhood and to enable us to own the future by being a tolerant, compassionate, just and caring nation" (National Policy, sec. 1.6). This chapter argues that, while the government's advocacy and support is necessary for the survival of popular theatre, collaborations based on government funding often yield subtle and latent conflict, in turn leading to some level of domestication. I borrow Mda's definition of a theatre of domestication as a theatre that "reinforces the structures that oppress the disadvantaged members of community. It perpetuates the exploitative relations between the disadvantaged communities and the ruling classes" (174). Mda further explains that this domestication can take three forms. First is a situation where an interventionist intentionally uses theatre to convince the oppressed communities that the oppressive structures are actually to their benefit. Second, a play with good intentions of liberating communities may end up yielding unintended results (i.e., being oppressive). Last is a situation of censorship (by the funder for instance) or self-censorship by the theatre group. As I will discuss later, my observations of the Botswana situation generally

reveal overlaps between the second and third forms of domestication. I propose that the domestication is inevitable because financial support almost always comes with an agenda, even if that agenda is creditable; for example, an agenda of improving the health of the populace, with "health" being defined (in terms of causes, solutions and implications) and managed by the state.

This chapter builds on the claims made in the previous chapter by revealing that because of funding, theatre groups and, in turn, communities do not always have much choice when it comes to the subjects and themes of performances, as they are usually determined by the supporting agency or government department. In such cases, the inability of communities to challenge top-down power relations means that power and decision-making remain with the funder, contradicting the crucial element of popular theatre: centering communities in the communication process. This chapter addresses the larger question of who benefits from these collaborations and/or conflicts: the government (funder), the theatre companies (bound by funding) or the communities themselves?

In order to think through my on-stage and off-stage performance observations, I will tap into Ngugi's theorization of the oftentimes antagonistic relationship between the state (as the funder in this case) and the artist (as the contracted agent herein), which he articulates in *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams: Toward a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa*. Ngugi argues that the inevitable clash between the arts and the state is necessitated by enactments of power: the power of performance in the arts and the performance of power by the state as they both struggle for the voice of the community—one to silence it and the other to give it to the silenced (24). What mainly draws me to

this theory is the theatre practitioners' loss of power over their art to the funder/state as the epigraphs suggest. While Ngugi is adamant about the inherently redemptive power of performance, I observe an overall theatre of domestication that has turned practitioners into mouthpieces of those in control (the funder) at the expense of the communities as Rabotsima points out in the epigraph above. Drawing inspiration from this theory, I ask: with the state's support, can the art of popular theatre remain a performance of politics from the artist's (and their audiences') point of view, rather than that of the state? Related to Ngugi's articulations of the relationship between the artist and the African state is James Scott's (1998) theory of *social engineering* in the profound *Seeing like a State*. Scott pins the failures of most governments' programs aimed at improving the well-being of its citizens on the tendency of certain states to impose and implement systems of classifications on societies so that the government can easily control them. I come to this theory as an attempt to understand not only the relationship between the artist and the state (and by extension communities), but also (and most importantly) the direct relationship (not one mediated by the artist) between the state and disadvantaged communities in specific situations that I will discuss below. I argue that it is sometimes the government's treatment of certain communities (such as the poor and the ethnically marginalized) that shapes its relationship with certain artists. As I will discuss in detail below, in the case of the poor and Basarwa in general, and specifically those involved in Central Kalahari Game Reserve controversy, the state uses modernistic definitions of "develop" to engineer poverty among these groups. Thus these theories help me understand the broader community/artist/state relationship in Botswana.

This chapter additionally seeks to provide insight into ways in which the state's support in part contextualizes popular theatre in Botswana by simultaneously enabling and hindering its ideological concerns. In its analysis of the complex relationship between artists and the state, this chapter will use the following plays as case studies: Moremogolo's *Alcohol Abuse and Drug Addiction* (funded by the ministry of Health), YOHO's *His Excellency* (which commends and begs the president to support the arts in Botswana), and Mama Theatre's *The Creature* (based on ethnicity and cultural diversity; it conjures up the relocation of the Basarwa from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve). While Moremogolo almost entirely relies on government funding, YOHO and Mama Theatre's reliance is partial. The three performances serve as examples of the different types of state/artist/community relationships in Botswana.

I argue that the direction of each play's narrative is to a large extent influenced by the nature of the relationship between the artist and the state as well as that of the involved communities and the state. Already discussed in the previous chapter, Moremogolo is a documented beneficiary of the Botswana Alcohol Levy Fund, mainly charged with the responsibility of developing and performing theatrical plays towards combating alcohol abuse and its effects ('Alcohol Levy in Botswana'). Additionally, this particular performance was sponsored by the Ministry of Health, which houses the Alcohol and Substance Abuse Division.[73] Subsequently, the narrative of the performance is from the perspective of the state as the patron and is a performance geared towards convincing the community (especially youths) to stop drinking. I maintain that here the state/artist/community relationship takes the form of a doctor/patient relationship

[73] The Division is mandated to curb the alcohol and substance abuse through educating the nation on its effects. Through this Division, the Ministry of Health is responsible for the administration and implementation of the Alcohol Levy Fund ('Alcohol Levy in Botswana').

whereby the doctor (the state and the artist) diagnoses the community and prescribes a solution: stop drinking, seek God and be problem free.

Although YOHO primarily relies on international donors such as New Partners Initiative (NPI), African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships (ACHAP), and the GOLD program funded by Hope HIV, it is also funded by the government to educate youth on health issues such as HIV/AIDS. Even though generally its focus is on out-of-school youth communities, this particular performance of *Your Excellency* is more of a state/artist relationship narrative: a relationship of patronage punctuated with explicit verbal and embodied expressions of kowtowing to the patron. In this relationship, YOHO invokes personalized voices of the disadvantaged members of the community (women and disabled artists) to evoke sympathy from the head of state, the President. This approach is intended to the benefit the artists' economic development.

Mama Theatre's reliance on government funding is minimal mainly because of government's insufficient funding. Although it has benefitted from government's funding, the group is adamant about how the funding limits its autonomy and political content. It occasionally gets funding from NGOs such as DITSWHANELO, the Botswana Centre for Human Rights. Thus in addition to HIV/AIDS work, Mama Theatre is geared more towards human rights issues such as ethnically marginalized communities, as demonstrated by the *Reteng* discussed in Chapter Two, as well as by *The Creature* herein discussed. As evidenced by the epigraph, as the director of Mama Theatre, Rabotsima's loyalty lies more strongly with the well-being of communities even though he is aware of the power of the state. Hence *The Creature* demonstrates one of the

predicaments that artists often face: choosing between the oppressive state and the oppressed communities.

History of Botswana Government's Support for Theatre

> *A lot of problems arise today from state funded theatre activities. One such problem is the relationship between the communities (as audiences) and the theatre practitioner (as agent), the audience and the state, and the theatre practitioner and the state. In all these relationships, the state becomes the undisputed winner as it controls the projects financially.*
>
> Bathusi Lesolobe, theatre practitioner (Personal Interview, February 2011).

The Botswana government support for theatre, and the first state/artist/community collaboration, can be traced to the first popular theatre project, *Laedza Batanani* (Community Awakening), in 1974. Founded by a community leader and two expatriate adult educators, "the project used popular theatre as a medium for encouraging participation, raising community issues, fostering discussion and promoting collective action" (Mda 13). Kidd and Byram write that the main aim of the project was to motivate communities to actively participate in their own development thereby minimizing excessive dependence on the government (1). In order to achieve this aim, the expatriate founders came up with an idealized mode of theatre that emphasized community participation that included post-performance discussions, as an important technique for sparking debate and dialogue among audience members about the issue at hand. This element is in keeping with Paulo Freire's belief that oppressed communities are capable of generating innovative ideas themselves through making a dialogue with each other (65).

The post-performance discussions, which first involved small groups and later open discussions with all audience members, were the most important part of the program since they provided feedback from the community regarding what actions should be taken to solve the problems presented. The discussions centered on an objective look at the problems as they affected the community and what might be done about them. During the discussions, the services of technical personnel were employed to give expert views on the issues raised. As Mlama asserts, this model introduced "a two-way communication process important in participatory communication. People were made aware of their situation, encouraged to look at their problems and take action to solve them instead of merely accepting messages from government employees" (71). This face-to-face element resonated with the *mafoko a matlhong* concept in Setswana, which literally translates to: "words are in the eyes".[74] It could be that this resonation led to theatre being placed above other forms of mass communications, thereby attracting a lot of support from communities, government and non-governmental organizations. Relevant to this chapter is the Botswana government support for theatre and its partnership with theatre artists.

Botswana government's attraction to popular theatre is in part captured by the opening speech of the first national popular theatre workshop held at Molepolole village in 1978, which given by the Minister of Education at the time, Hon. K.P. Morake. The workshop was a significant event in the development of government support of popular theatre in Botswana. In his speech, Morake cites "non-formal education" and "communication" as some of the most important elements that sparked the interest of the government (particular that of the Ministry of Education) in popular theatre:

[74] This concept puts emphasis on face-to-face communication, which allows for both verbal and non-verbal communication between those involved in the communication process.

> (…) In a country like Botswana, with its widely-scattered rural communities and limited (though fast-growing) educational facilities, non-formal education becomes the key channel of communication between the Government and the majority of the people. (you will note that I use the term in a two-way sense – education of the people by the Government, and also education of the Government by the people (…) your job [extension workers] is to communicate ideas and messages from the centre to the remotest villages in this land. But also to bring back to the centre, the ideas, aspirations and messages of the people (Mackenzie 51).

The speech points to the culture of *therisanyo* (consultation), with which chiefs governed in pre-colonial Botswana. I am tempted to argue that, as an emerging democratic post-colonial state, the government saw the element of democratic participation in popular theatre as an opportunity to assert itself as a liberal democratic state by paying homage to the tradition of consultation, which had previously served Batswana very well. Hence, while support for popular theatre was part of the state's agenda of developing its citizens, the support also has political connotations that challenged the government's notion of "development" as I will discuss later in my analysis of performances. If the government's initial attraction to popular theatre (which promotes democratic two-way communication) is tied to the country's commitment to consultation (democratic communication), what happens when this commitment begins to wane and becomes questionable in certain situations? What implications does this shift have on the practice of popular theatre? Can it still genuinely pursue its function under government funding? Can communities still think independently under the government's conditions for funding?

Relevant to the topic under discussion (i.e., the state/artist/community relationship) is the promotion of community independence from the government. How involved are communities in making decisions that affect their well-being, as the Minister implied? By supporting this project and other subsequent popular theatre projects, does the Botswana government still support community participation, independence and democratic communication? In my analysis of performances, I am attentive to this level of consistency in community involvement in state/artist relationships.

Since *Laedza Batanani*, the state/theatre artist partnership in Botswana continues to be compelled by a number of social and health issues that according to the state, threaten the well-being of the nation. The Botswana government (as the guardian of the nation) and theatre practitioners (as mobilizers of the nation) oftentimes act in partnership towards promoting the welfare of society. On the part of the state, promoting theatre was inspired by *Laedza Batanani*, which demonstrated the ability of theatre to function as an effective tool of communication towards social change. Secondly, it is an implementation of the National Policy of Culture, which sets out to encourage and facilitate the support of all artists towards improving their welfare and excellence.[75] The *Laedza Batanani* project therefore provides a foundation for popular theatre practices in Botswana and for the government's support of theatre.

Since the implementation of *Laedza Batanani*, the government has, through its various departments, continued to purposely engage theatre artists to educate and raise the consciousness of the civic population on issues/themes deemed to be of significant national concern. Ideally, the purpose of popular theatre practitioners is, in my opinion, to

[75] Botswana. Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, Department of Culture and Youth. *National Policy on Culture.* Government Printer, October 2001.

work with communities to determine how these national concerns/themes are experienced by different members of society (i.e., with regard to gender, class, ethnicity and age, etc.). Does the state/theatre practitioner partnership provide opportunities for this work to take place? It is important to note that even though the *Laedza Batanani* project was instrumental in the development of popular theatre, not just in Botswana but also in Africa in general, it had fundamental weaknesses that eventually contributed to its waning. One of the weaknesses that I discuss in detail in Chapter Two is that government officials and elite members of communities maintained control over the narratives. This, I suggest, is an indication of the state's inability and unwillingness to cease or transfer power completely. If this is the case, then the state will always have an upper hand in its relationships with artists and communities, contradicting the democratic communication between the government and communities alluded to in Minister Morake's speech.

Department of Arts and Culture: 'Evidence' and Administration of Government Support

Under the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture, the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) was established in 2009 with the mandate to preserve, develop and promote the arts and culture section by empowering the creative arts and cultural industries (Maotwanyane Orometswe, personal interview). I would like to draw attention to the sharp contrast between the definition of popular theatre as understood by its founders and the above mentioned Minister Morake's speech. There is a contrast/shift from popular theatre as a medium of bi-directional communication to the end of social change to popular theatre as an "industry." One possible explanation for this could be that here popular theatre is lumped in the same category as dance, music, visual arts

mainstream theatre and other cultural practices that are income generating. The other possible reason substantiates my argument about government's view of popular theatre: one of the many strategies of pushing the ideas of Vision 2016. As I briefly discuss in the Introduction, the Vision – which is aimed at promoting prosperity – is a problematic program that was prompted by neoliberal demands and is seemingly guided by its rhetoric. My research reveals that popular theatre in Botswana operates within this national program which in turn contextualizes it and conditions how artists participate in it.

Hence some of the questions that I discuss in this chapter are: does the partnership operating within this national project allow for an exploration of how these national concerns are experienced differently by different members of society? To what extent does state sponsorship affect the decision making autonomy of popular theatre companies? The study reveals that, while the state and the theatre practitioners may agree on the realities of certain social maladies in their joint efforts to advance the mission of the Vision, they oftentimes disagree on the causes of the problems and the theatrical implementations of the issues, especially when the government is implicated in the marginalization of communities.

The DAC is the state's umbrella body charged with the responsibility of providing administrative and financial support for the arts, including theatre. Thus the DAC is the body through which government support for theatre is administered and realized. In order to achieve this responsibility, DAC is guided by the National Policy on Culture that was drafted in October, 2001, and approved by Cabinet in April, 2002. This support is articulated under section 6.17 of the policy. In implementing the policy, Maotwanyane,

the Senior Performing Arts Officer with the department, confirmed that his office was responsible for ensuring "growth and diversification of the performance space for the arts in Botswana through providing necessary logistical support skills training, finance and other resources" (personal interview).

Though alluding to the insufficiency and unequal distribution of government funding as well as the discrepancy between policy and what actually transpires on the ground, Bathusi Lesolobe, a theatre practitioner and activist, confirms the government's support for theatre. He asserts:

> The National Policy on Culture fully supports the work of artists but this support is not fully given. The government's cry is that the national cake is very small and she cannot be able to fully support the arts. The Department of Arts and Culture is responsible for the implementation of the National Policy on Culture. However, the Department has four major divisions: culture, performing arts, visual arts and celebrations. Of these four, only one does not involve theatre: visual arts. The problem is that the Department is not given enough funds to carry out its mandate. Two other Departments in the same Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture are given far much better funding than Arts and Culture. These are the Department of Youth and the Department of Sport. The little that the Department gets is not enough to fund not only theatre, but also the whole bracket of performing arts (personal interview, February 14, 2013).

Judging by the perspectives of theatre practitioners like Lesolobe, it is safe to say that the Botswana government supports theatre more on paper than practically: the state cannot quite live up to its mandate. The small "cake" that Lesolobe refers to is validated by Maotwanyane, who states that one of the programs through which the department funds theatre is called "Unionization and Coordination." By unionizing and grouping artists under umbrella bodies (such as Comedy Association of Botswana, Reetsanang

Association of Community Theatre Groups, Botswana Poetry and Storytelling Association, Botswana Dance Association, Botswana Musicians Union and Botswana Association of Theatre Activists (BAOTA)), the program ensures easy coordination, support and funding. According to Maotwanyane (as a representative of the state) and Lesolobe (as a theatre practitioner), each association is given an annual administrative grant of P100, 000.00 ($12,987.13). In the case of theatre, the grant goes to BAOTA as the supposed representative of all registered theatre groups, and is mainly used for rent, utilities, stationeries, office supplies and general day-to-day office upkeep. Maotwanyane attests to the insufficiency of the grant as he emphasizes it is not even enough to remunerate the standard officer – elected by BAOTA's executive committee and charged with the responsibility of handling all secretarial and administration related duties – who is currently highly underpaid with a monthly salary of about P1000.00 ($127.00). The rest of the staff members are volunteers.

In addition to the administrative grant, the DAC funds artists through yet another calendar program called the Constituency Arts Competition. These competitions are held every quarter countrywide, at each parliamentary constituency and are guided by specific guidelines and themes. The competitions begin at Council ward level with different culture and arts categories (such as music, visual arts, dance, poetry and theatre). The categories are then divided into two: individual (such as poetry, solo music or dance performance) and group, where theatre belongs. At the ward level, there are three winning positions in both the individual and group categories. The prizes for the theatre category are P3000.00, P2000.00 and P1000.00 for position one, two and three respectively. Thereafter, all the first position holders are selected as representatives of

each constituency and move to the finals where they compete with fellow representatives. Once again, there are three winning positions with the following prizes: P5000.00, P3000.00 and P2000.00 for first, second and third positions respectively. Evidently, the money is not enough to sustain any popular theatre group. Notwithstanding, the government's efforts are commendable.

A more large scale government's funding program is through the annual President's Day Competitions held in July. Registration for these competitions begins in February. The competitions are typically preceded by mini competitions held at the end of April (quarter finals, semifinals) countrywide continuing to the President's Day finals. Ten groups make it to the final competitions where they compete against one another. In the end, there are four winning positions with the prizes of P25, 000.00; P22, 000.00; P20, 000.00 and P17, 500.00 for first, second, third and fourth position respectively. These competitions, like all the others, have guiding objectives and themes which all revolve around Vision 2016 goals.

The President's Day Competitions grand winner is then tasked with the responsibility of devising a play on a given theme such as "HIV/AIDS in the Workforce" - within the larger HIV/AIDS Program. Most importantly, the play has to be in alignment with the objectives of that year's World AIDS Day. Once the play is approved by the monitoring officer(s), it is then performed on World AIDS Day (December 1) at the hosting place. Thereafter, the group tours the country with the same performance. It is important to note that the whole project is sponsored by the DAC.

Yet another program through which the DAC funds arts (including theatre groups) and culture projects is through the Arts and Culture grant. The grant is generally

aimed at developing, promoting and preserving cultural activities. According to Maotwanyane, funded projects include documentations (publishing manuscripts, visual and audio recordings), launching a music CD, arts and cultural festivals and performances, general capacity building (such as playwriting, directing, acting, choreography training skills) as well as workshops and seminars. The grant gives registered successful individual theatre groups an opportunity to directly access government funding. Unlike the annual administrative grant, this grant's availability and amount depends on that of funding. The main source of the grant is the already discussed Alcohol Levy as well as money from various votes within the department.

When available, the Arts and Culture grant is usually administered in this way: DAC sends out a call for proposals with objectives and guidelines. Upon receiving applications, the department sends out acknowledgement letters to all the applicants. Then the applications go through two levels of assessment: the Grant Assessment Committee (GAC) and the Financial Request Assessment Committee (FRAC).

The first assessment by the GAC is done within the department and comprises different heads of department and relevant professionals and experts in the various fields of arts and culture. At this level the main focus of the committee is on how each group (in the case of theatre) fulfills the outlined requirements and most importantly how the intended project benefits specific communities and/or the nation at large. The committee then short lists the successful groups and hands over the assessment to the FRAC.

The Financial Request Assessment Committee is made up of representatives from outside local financial assistance organizations. These include the Botswana government fully funded Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA), Botswana

government statutory authority, Local Enterprise Authority (LEA) and the National Development Bank (NDB). [76] With their entrepreneurial and financial services expertise, representatives from these organizations assess logistics and viability of the selected projects. Since some projects are intended for profit making, these organizations assess relevance to communities (such as in the case of popular theatre groups) as well as the target market (for profit-making groups or individuals artists). A decision to grant what projects is made at this level. According to Maotwanyane, this committee can override and challenge the recommendations and rejections made by the GAC. After reconciling their recommendations, the two committees make a final decision about the successful groups. Thereafter, the DAC notifies the said groups.

As would be expected, applications for the Arts and Culture are highly competitive, due to limited funds and the high number of applicants. Just like any grantor of financial assistance, successful applicants are bound by the grant guidelines. For instance, at the time of my research, the guidelines clearly stated, "By accepting a grant, organisations agree to adhere to the DAC's commitment to support the alleviation of poverty, disadvantage, discrimination and deprivation […] and to allow Officers to visit the project periodically for monitoring purposes" (Botswana Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs 5). The guidelines invite a partnership to fight national concerns over the concerns and well-being – that may or may not match the state identified ones - of specific communities. At the same time, the conditions suggest some element of policing will occur to ensure funds are put to the correct use in the reference to "monitoring."

[76] LEA promotes and facilitates entrepreneurship development through targeted interventions. CEDA develops local entrepreneurs through funding, provision of training and mentoring services. NDB is a commercial bank that provides credit and financial services.

According to Mr. Tshireletso Modikwa, the Projects Officer at the time of my research, this monitoring can range from written self-reports to being visited by officers.

The Senior Performing Arts Officer, Maotwanyane, adds that although the department leaves script writing to the theatre company, the DAC provides a synopsis and/or a specific theme. Theatre practitioners corroborate both Modikwa's and Maotwanyane's accounts, and further add that the monitoring can take the following direction: the department (or any government department/association) can give a theme such as HIV/AIDS, and then the theatre group will conduct the necessary research with the said community and create a play for their benefit. The practitioner then previews the play for the funding personnel. As Rabotsima notes in an interview, "It is then that they will decide what goes in the play and what doesn't" (Rabotsima). Another interviewed artist, Lesolobe adds, "Sometimes the state's servants/personnel become skeptical whether the project proposed by the practitioner would bear fruit" (Lesolobe). In such cases, the state's personnel would want to have control over the script to ensure that it addresses the issues they want to be addressed. Both these accounts suggest that some level of censorship and control are being imposed on the practitioner's art by the funder. While control of the script by the funder is necessary and provides eligibility, it can be problematic if this control is imposed to serve the interests of the funder at the expense of the supposed beneficiaries of the sponsored project – in this case, the practitioner's community. For instance, when the state views health issues such as alcoholism and HIV/AIDS to be caused solely by the community's irresponsible and immoral behavior, what it deems to be effective solutions to these problems might not actually be in the best interest of the community. Such acts of censorship are further demonstrated by Tsholo's

account of how his group was ordered to alter their HIV play's plot; they were told to remove the male government officials, who played the role of catalysts in the spread of the virus. I will discuss the different routes that different practitioners take under these circumstances later on.

While scholars such as Ola Johansson argue that community based theatre "can only attain its optimal cogency or influence if it is openly and legitimately backed by political and other authoritative advocates" (24), I add that what while government support of popular theatre efforts is necessary for the continuation of the theatre, such support can bring more harm than good to communities if its administration and implementation contradict the ideological and pedagogical functions of popular theatre. Besides developing and promoting arts and culture, one of the driving forces behind Botswana government's support for popular theatre is the latter's potential to communicate Vision 2016 to the nation at large. As discussed in the Introduction, the government's mission is to communicate and explain the ideas behind the Vision to the citizens as widely as possible, using every medium possible.

Vision 2016 Relevance

In this way, generally, popular theatre in Botswana currently participates in larger national projects geared toward achieving the state's Vision 2016 Program. The Vision thus is central to the joint efforts of the state and the theatre practitioner. First, as theatre practitioner Bathusi Lesolobe explains in a personal interview, "The National Policy on Culture fully supports the work of artists." That is, he believes that the state's support for the arts is realized through the National Policy on Culture, which was set up as a "strategy that will take Botswana to 2016 app 1.6)" Hence, the guidelines and theatre

practitioners' accounts have shown that the government financially supports theatre projects that generally or specifically address and push forward the objectives of the Vision, from the perspective of the state.

For example, some of the observed performance themes examined in this dissertation (such as HIV/AIDS prevention and domestic violence) are stipulated as some of the important objectives of the pillars of The Vision 2016 Plan. These include: envisioning an AIDS/HIV free nation so there will be no new infections in the year 2016 and eradicating all forms of crime such as violation of individual human rights and the abuse of spouses and children so as to produce a safe and secure nation. In order to realize this Vision, it is the responsibility of the government to change the mindset of every Motswana. The ideas behind the Vision must be communicated and explained as widely as possible using every medium possible, including popular theatre, which unfortunately receives very little funding from non-state sources. Hence, the Vision to a large extent guides the impetus for patronage and collaboration: to persuade communities to accept the messages presented to them. Most importantly, the Vision is also the source of innocuous domestication in that this process of communicating the Vision's ideas can ignore or silence the perceptions and voices of the community.

The following examples describe performances that give insight to the varying relationships between state and theatre practitioner. Each group's production demonstrates a different kind of understanding of the group's relationship to the state.

YOHO's His Excellency: Homage to Patronage – The State as the Messiah of Artists

Performed with other plays – to an audience of mostly youth, artists and government workers in the capital city - geared toward raising funds to buy a wheelchair for one crippled local artist, *His Excellency* serves as an address to the Botswana President about challenges faced by artists. Hence, the play exhibits a patronage relationship between state and artist.

On the bare, proscenium stage of Maitisong Hall in Gaborone, a white banner forms the backdrop of the performance. The banner is flanked by four traditional clay pots (two on each side), which contain ornamental strands of dried grass. Written in black across the banner are the following words: "Performing Artists National Conference." At the center of the banner, a sky blue ribbon banner in white words reads: "Guest Speaker: His Excellency." On the left side of the blue ribbon is a picture of a woman holding large ostrich eggs, while on the right of the ribbon is a picture of Tswana baskets – some of Botswana's tourist attractions. Viewed together, the colors on the banner resemble that of the national flag: sky blue, black, and white.[77] This, I propose, is YOHO's performance of patriotism on the surface. The words at the center of the banner, "His Excellency" are also the title of the performance. In the words of Mandla Pule in introducing the play, the performance constitutes "artists addressing the president of Botswana, Lt. Gen. Sir Seretse Khama Ian Khama." Downstage left, there is a table draped with a white table cloth and a bouquet of fresh flowers on top. The guest speakers are seated at this table, and include the president, who is flanked on his right by the Minister of Youth, Sport, and Culture, Mr. Shaw Kgathi. These characters are played by two males wearing face masks resembling the faces of the famous figures. To cater to those who do not know the

[77] The sky blue represents Batswana's reliance on water and rain (*pula*) – a rare commodity in Botswana. Hence the country's motto: "*Pula*," which means, "Let there be rain." *Pula* is also the country's currency. The black and white colors represent harmony between the black and white races in Botswana.

two men, there are name plates in front of the minister and the president, reading: "Hon. Minister of Youth, Sport and Culture: Mr. Shaw Kgathi" and "His Excellency: Lt. Gen. Sir Seretse Khama Ian Khama." The banner provides the setting of the performance: the performing artists' national conference, to which the president and the minister have been invited as distinguished guests, and the former as the guest speaker. The performance begins after the president's speech has taken place.

The performance opens with drum beats and ululations as a group of six young dancers enter the stage: three females and three males. The three girls wear black, short, flared skirts with t-shirts in varying colors: pink, blue, and yellow. Their male counterparts wear black shorts with bare torsos. All six dancers have rattles (*matlhawa*) around their ankles and beads across their chests.[78] As the dancers shuffle and stomp their feet, the rattling sound is in sync with the drum beat to produce a unique rhythmic tempo. To the rhythm of the drum beats, the dancers perform a blend of traditional and ballroom dance- like (in its widest definition) choreographies. After they gracefully leave the stage, the executive director of YOHO, Mr. Vuyisile Otukile, enthusiastically enters the stage dressed in grey pants and a brown, long-sleeved, traditional shirt. Jumping up and down with excitement, he claps his hands and asks the already clapping audience to join him in

[78] *Matlhawa* (which go by different names in different ethnic groups) are rattles made from the cocoons of wild silkworm. They are essential instruments for all traditional dances. According to Denbow and Thebe (2006), the cocoons are only found on *mophane* tree and some species of acacia trees. Once harvested:

> "The stiff, fibrous, oblong pods about two inches long are soaked in water to soften them. They are then slit along one end and filled with small stones. The slit end is then pressed closed and allowed to dry and seal shut before the cocoon is tied at each end onto a double string of rolled fiber or leather cord. More than 100 cocoons are generally used to make a single leg rattle, which is six feet or more in length. The rattles are wrapped around both lower legs between the ankles and the knee." (197-8)

The stones inside the cocoon make a rattle sound as the dancer performs.

applauding the dancers for a "great performance." The audience joins in with clapping, whistling, and ululating, demonstrating an appreciation of the performance.

As the commotion of the audience's applauding wanes, Vuyisile speaks to the audience in Setswana, explaining that "the performers were actually verifying the elder's speech about ample artistic talent in Botswana." He then walks downstage right and stands behind a podium. Speaking in a microphone, he turns to face the guests of honor. Switching to English, as English is an official language in Botswana and perhaps also because the president has a limited knowledge of the national language, Setswana, he thanks the president for addressing the artists at the conference. Slightly curtsying now and then, he continues to address the president:

> Your Excellency…we understand from your speech that Botswana is immensely endowed with artistically creative people. It is in recognition of this bestowal that your government continues to do everything in its power, everything in its power to ensure that artists reach their greatest potential for economic development and empowerment. The grants given to associations such as Botswana Association of Theatre Activists, *Ngwao Loshalaba*, Botswana Music Association, and many others. All these demonstrate your governance and commitment to the development of artists. Your Excellency, while these efforts are appreciated, we all agree, Your Excellency, that a lot still needs to be done.

With this speech, he introduces the performance that has been prepared for the president by performing artists at the conference.

This opening speech speaks volumes about the nature of the relationship between the state and the artist demonstrated by YOHO in this specific production: it is a relationship of patronage toward the economic advancement of individual artists. Clearly, this relationship excludes communities. The presentation demonstrates my earlier claim that the state's neoliberal influenced view of arts as an industry, in turn conditions artists' participation: entrepreneurs. Thus, this production represents one kind of artist relationship based on purely economic benefits: the state herein figured as the patron father and the artist as the client child. I propose that the role of YOHO, as a client, is to nurture and sustain the relationship through all means possible – which usually means appeasing the patron. Appeasements include performances of loyalty and artistic talent, as well as verbalized and embodied kowtowing to the president as the grantor and father of the state

For instance, YOHO performs nationalism as a strategy to win the president's support for the arts by using symbols of national identity as set props and including traditional performing art instruments and performance art within the play. This patriotic performance is echoed by the audience's response with ululations. Thus, YOHO taps on the national commonality of the performers, audience members, and the president (to whom the play is directed) to seek solidarity in the support and promotion of Tswana performing artists. It is important to note that ululation (*mogolokwane*) – an onomatopoetic word that describes the sound made by women expressing celebration and appreciation – herein functions as a form of audience participation.

While the audience already seems entertained by the dance performance, by asking the audience to clap for the dancers, Otukile appears desperate to convince not

only the president but the audience of YOHO's artistic talent. By urging the audience to applaud the "great performance," YOHO coerces the audience to support its performance and mission by extension. Through blending traditional and contemporary dance movements, YOHO seems desperate to demonstrate both its loyalty to Tswana traditional performance forms and the progressive state of their art, hence placing itself in a position deserving of state resources.

In addition to the performance of patriotism and artistic talent, the play participates in visual, verbal, and embodied acts of kowtowing to the president and the minister as grantors. The continued visual presence of the president and the title on stage, the recurring utterance of the phrase "Your Excellency" and its Setswana variant "*mogolo*" (elder), and the constant curtsying that accompanies each utterance frame the performance as a kowtow to the president, thus solidifying the patronage relationship.

Furthermore, in order to nurture and sustain this patronage relationship, the performance invokes individual artists' real stories of victimization in order to win the paternal state's support. These personalized narratives are structured in two separate monologues by two young artists: female actress Boitshepho Nyathi and the well-known physically challenged (wheelchair-bound) male singer, Kabo Matlho.[79]

In the first monologue, "I have a dream," the actress takes us into her journey as a performer by describing the struggles she faces as a woman performer. In her words, doors were often slammed in her face because of her appearance and she was sometimes put in unethical situations because of her gender when she was offered roles in exchange for sleeping with the men who control the theatre world. But she stayed true to who she

[79] Kabo attracted a lot of attention and sympathy countrywide when he was born in the early 1980s without arms and legs, due to a random genetic mutation. He is now a very popular Rhythm and Blues (R&B) singer.

was and refused the offers. She points to the financial constraints (and unethical distributions of funding) faced by artists when she laments, "In this industry, if you don't know anyone, you are as good as being alone...in this world of dreams and struggles, only the fittest survive." In the long run, the stress took a toll on her as she watched her dream dying right in front of her eyes. Dropping down her head in tears, she remembers how she took refuge in alcohol and lost focus and control of her life. Thankfully, she finally rediscovered her dream and love for performance, which allows her to express herself. It is this dream that has carried her through the tribulations of her journey.

Using a concept similar to Mda's "people playing people," YOHO taps into powerful, self-performed narratives of female marginalization in the male driven world of theatre to evoke feelings of sympathy and pity from both the audience (its coerced supporter) and from the president (its patron). Even though this personal narrative alludes to the broader concerns of male domination in the theatre world – gender inequalities that oftentimes yield male biased representations of issues – it is reduced into a simplistic outline of the destructiveness of lack of resources, and thus becomes a plea to the president that the economic advancement of artists is the key to overcoming sexism in the theatre.

The second monologue gives the personal struggles of Kabo, a physically challenged artist. As a musician, he laments the fact that his music is pirated and cries, "Your Excellency...the more they pirated it, the more popular I became, the more popular I became, I remained poor. They praised me, but did not feed me." Unfortunately, this depicts the plight faced by many artists in Botswana. His appeal to the president is to change the industry: to build art schools and state theatres and, most importantly, "To ask

our people to treat artists with dignity." As he breaks into a song, the executive director, Vuyisile, speaks over the top of the faded song: "Your Excellency, your people have the belief that the nation will unite in the support for the arts...your people have a dream that the theatre will grow, that one day art schools will be in operation." The audience whistles, ululates, and claps at these words of hope, bringing the play to a close.

Just like with the first monologue, through Kabo's monologue YOHO invokes a self-performance describing individual dilemmas and concerns to evoke feelings of sympathy from the audience and the president. Despite his big voice, Kabo's wheelchair-bound body already conjures feelings of pity among the audience, as evidenced by constant utterances of "*ao shems*" (poor thing). Coupling the sympathy-attracting body with self-performed narratives of unfairness to a large extent reduces the broader concerns described (copyright violation) into a performance of self-pity, a request for funding.

Hence, the two monologues are individualized dreams figured in terms of the individual economic sustenance of the artist. Furthermore, punctuating the narrations with the phrases "Your Excellency" and "I have a dream" further crystalizes YOHO's view of its performed relationship with the state: the state as the messiah to the helpless, child-like artist. The executive director's voice-over further confirms this patronage relationship as one that only benefits artists at the exclusion of communities. If this is how YOHO understands its relationship with the state, what position would it take should the state be in conflict with the youth communities YOHO is committed to serve?

Despite the evident performance of patriotism and kowtowing, with the words, "Your Excellency, while these efforts are appreciated, we all agree, Your Excellency, that

a lot still needs to be done," YOHO tippy-toes around a fundamental broader concern expressed by practitioners such as Lesolobe: the insufficient and theoretical government support. By paraphrasing clauses from the National Policy on Culture, "Botswana is endowed with talent in these areas" (sec. 6.17), YOHO is reminding the president and the minister in charge to implement its theoretical support of theatre. However, YOHO's purpose of soliciting the state's support in this specific performance is to the benefit of individual artists' dreams of economic sustenance, as evidenced by YOHO's careful address to specific clauses in policy addressing copyright laws that benefit individual artists.

While some artists' are desperate for the patronage relationship, theatre practitioner Mpho Rabotsima expresses concern with how this patronage undermines community participation in and ownership of the representation of issues that marginalize them. I therefore propose that such understandings of the state/artist patronage relationship, which informs performances, are fertile ground for domestication of the arts to the detriment of already marginalized communities.

Even more worrisome is how YOHO alludes to the apt dysfunction of the competitive structure where only the fittest survive – through the first monologue – with the overall intention of benefiting from the same structure. As Botishepho points out, the competitive, skeptical, and hostile environment of the theatre is even more inhospitable to women artists, who struggle to be recognized for their artistic talent rather than for the physical opportunities that their gender presents. However, instead of addressing these gender politics and how they influence the creation of messages and are received by audiences, *Your Excellency* reduces this broad issue to a plea for economic advancement.

Thus, in a bid to survive and sustain the dysfunctional structure, YOHO kowtows to the state and plays a victim card. By sustaining the state's powerful position (through reducing the artist to the position of a helpless victim), this popular theatre group with the aim of democratizing communication between the state, artist, and community instead widens the gap between community and state. Such positioning in part yields domestication and easier purchasing of the artist's services by His Excellency the state.

This purchasing of services resonates with Ngugi's theorization of the African state and the artist as articulated in *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dream.* His broad and consistent claim is that the artist and the state are continuously at war, as they are two authorities with different functions. He adamantly maintains that "the state in a class society is an instrument of control in the hands of whatever is the dominant social force. Art on the other hand, in its beginning was always an ally of the human search for freedom from hostile nature and nurture" (28). Thus, in Ngugi's view, the art is for the community while state may or may not be for the community depending on who's in charge.

Although on the surface, His Excellency may be seen by its intended audiences (state audience); I argue that in view of the performance context, raising funds for the physically challenged artist, the play is a tactical response to state power geared towards a specific, state audience. It strategically uses the state's view of art as an industry to urge the state to treat artists accordingly: to developing and financially investing in them. Judging by YOHO's other performances such as the previously discussed *The Flower* - which completely aligns itself the concerned communities – I argue that YOHO does not always position its relationship with the state in this way; rather other values and

priorities prevail when the group performs other work. Additionally, the performance reveal one way in which state- funded theatre groups can tactically navigate conflict with the state.

A brief look at the Character of the Botswana State

Botswana came under the British Government's protection in 1885, and was from then on called the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Prior to the indirect rule of colonial Britain, *therisanyo* (consultation) was the hallmark of governance. This traditional governance was structured through the *kgotla* forum – the traditional public meeting place where adult males freely debated and influenced decisions concerning communities. Despite the gender exclusive nature of the *kgotla*, the *kgosi* (Chief) traditionally ruled according to consultations with the community.[80] This consultation is captured by the Setswana saying, "*Kgosi ke kgosi ka batho*" (a chief is a chief by the people). Operating under indirect rule, the British colonial administration depended on the *kgotla* for consultation with Batswana. As local historian Christian Makgala writes, what made indirect rule different in Botswana was in part the "tribal public opinion, which was able to work independently or with the support of the chiefs or British colonial government" (23). This three-way interplay warranted relative transparency and consultation in traditional governance of Botswana. As suggested by sayings such as the one cited above and "*kgosi thotobolo e olela matlakala otlhe*" (the chief is the trash heap that collects all kinds of garbage), the chief consolidates his identity and function through his role's symbiotic relationship with the community. In addition to *therisanyo*, other cultural concepts and beliefs in Botswana promote peace and harmony among

[80] This marked the kgotla as an exclusive public space: no space for women and the youth. In Chapter 2, I discuss its contradictions to the democratic communication and community participation promoted by popular theatre performances often held at the kgotla.

communities, including the importance of verbal resolutions of conflict. Thus, the saying, "*Ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo*" (the biggest fight is fought by mouth).

Unfortunately, this rule by consultation began to wane in the late 1950s and 1960s following the emergence of new tribal councils made up of a few elected representatives in the tribal areas. Makgala observes that "the meetings of these councils were held indoors and closed to members of public. The decisions from these meetings were later announced to the populace in the *kgotla*" (24). This marks a fundamental transformation of the *kgotla* from a place of relative consultation to that of persuasion and top-down governance opportunity. In this regard, the *kgotla* began to provide only the illusion of consultation.

This manipulation of the *kgotla* was further entrenched by the representative governance of the new, post-independence liberal democracy. Botswana received independence from Britain on September 30, 1966, following the general elections that placed Sir Seretse Khama, the founder of the Botswana Democratic Party, as the first president of self-governed Botswana. Since Botswana's independence, successive elections have resulted in the continual re-election of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) among opposition parties such as the Botswana National Front (BNF), Botswana People's Party (BPP), Botswana Congress Party (BCP), and the newly formed Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD). As the country's only governing party to date, the BDP has in effect ruled the country. While some people have equated elections with democracy, political scientist John Holm and African politics analyst Anna Rabin cast doubt on this assumption. In her article, "Why Elections in Botswana Do Not Necessarily Equal Democracy," Rabin's main concern with the BDP's continued dominance in

Botswana is the amount of power the ruling party is endowed with: the power to make political appointments. She argues that this undermines Botswana's commitment to elections.

Holm critiques the system of democracy generally, arguing that there is no guarantee that elected representatives will follow public opinion and interest. Holm's view resonates with Augusto Boal's view on democracy, which grounds his concept of Legislative Theatre.

To Boal, the system of voting is paradoxical. He claims that a citizen voting for a political representative is actually giving up his or her own power and transferring it into the hands of the representative. Thus, as you use your power to form the government, you lose that power entirely until your next vote. This means that, in the years between votes you are nothing but a spectator of your representative. Echoing Holm, in an interview with Tom Magill, Boal asserts that the horrifying thing is that, whether or not you trust your delegate, the delegate can never fully represent you, because "when someone speaks in your place, even if it's an honest person, intelligent person, creative person...that person will never translate correctly what you want to say" (Boal n.p). To this I add that part of this misrepresentation is largely due to class, geographical space, ethnicity, gender, and other disparities between the representatives and the represented. If representative governance does not rule in consultation with the people that give it power, the result is a pseudo-democracy.

Despite the recent transformation in governance, the legacy of relative consultation with people and accountability that characterized the pre-colonial stage and was partly preserved by the Protectorate stage has to a large extent shaped post-colonial

Botswana into a stable economic and political state. For instance, praise of Botswana's leadership success is sung relentlessly by Abdi Samatar in his book, *An African Miracle: State and Class Leadership and Colonial Legacy in Botswana Development.* Even though speaking from a purely economic development perspective, Samatar describes Botswana as a liberal democratic political system whose miraculous political economic achievements are to a large extent due to a harmonious relationship between the dominant class and its political leadership. According to Samatar, this "social chemistry of the dominant class and its disciplined leadership" (6) is a key force that distinguishes successful from failed states. This theory is buoyed by the Institute for Economics and Peace report of 2009, which ranked Botswana as Africa's most peaceful nation and provided it a ranking of thirty-fourth out of over one hundred countries surveyed. This earned Botswana the reputation of a "nation of peace" and "the African Miracle." The report places Botswana ahead of the United Kingdom, Italy, and the United States of America in terms of peace and stability, and attributes Botswana's stability to its strong electoral system and lack of internal and external conflicts.

While the observations of the report and Samatar are to a large extent true, I argue that the lack of internal and external conflicts used to measure Botswana's success is in part a result of the manipulation of the *kgotla* by the government representatives who, as the local historian Makgala observes, use it for the "purposes of persuading the people into accepting concluded government decisions or policies" (24). That is, peace is upheld by the populace's false sense of having been consulted.

At what cost does this image of peace come? In what ways are certain citizens silenced by the ruling elites in order that they might maintain this image? How does the

state use money to buy the power of theatre practitioners and, in turn, communities' independence?

The populace is central to the state/artist relationship, for, as Ngugi posits, the populace is the source of conflict between state and artist, with the state fighting to take away the populace's voice and the artist fighting to give voice to the populace. It is thus important to consider the internal structure of Botswana's stable and the composition of the dominant class identified by Samatar in order to glimpse into the practical lived experiences of the populace as objects of governance.

Samatar aptly observes that most of the "members of Botswana's dominant class at the time of independence were members of those chiefly families who were among the largest traditional cattle owners. Also involved were a handful of educated individuals in the public service." (6) This group was closely affiliated with the colonial administration and a small number of white settlers. The dominant class has been able to dominate public life throughout the years of Botswana's independence, imposing a capitalist development strategy on society (6). The poor members of society were not empowered by the independence, but rather experienced a transfer of allegiance from the colonialists to the Tswana ruling elite, leading to internalized oppression and a culture of silence of the non-dominant classes. This type of silencing is similar to psychologist Dana Jack's theory of "self-silencing" discussed in chapter three.[81] Unfortunately, this silence translates into a "lack of internal conflict" or "peace," which are markers of success used to describe Botswana's leadership. Given the fact Botswana has experienced unsullied leadership by BDP since independence, the dominant class of elite members of society

[81] According to Dana Jack and Alisha Ali (2010), when in oppressive relationships (social or close), individuals engage in self-silencing to avoid conflict, maintain relationships, and ensure emotional and physical safety.

have continued to lead. This claim is supported by political scientist Kenneth Good, who lived in Botswana for more than fifteen years.[82] He observes:

> The Botswana Democratic Party...was formed and led by the wealthiest members of society. Its first central committee was composed of cattle barons and traders, with its founding leader, Seretse Khama, owning about 30,000 beasts. Recruitment policies focused upon "key educated propertied figures in rural communities", who were expected to lead their electors by responsible example. Inequality retained its cultural legitimacy, and unequal appropriation was sanctioned both by the past and by the new electoralism. Government programmes and favourable marketing opportunities were exploited, and within the first decade of independence, the previously wealthy became extremely rich cattle owners. (189–190)

Good points to the marriage between the previous political establishment and the current one and highlights the privileged position of the ruling class in order to illuminate the roots of the increasing gap between rich and poor in Botswana.

Samatar also recognizes this gap, even as he praises Botswana's miraculous leadership. He pins the "radical inequality" between rich and poor to political leaders' emphasis on growth rather than equity (12). These observations indirectly challenge the "political economic achievements" for which he praises Botswana, for it unmasks the poor on which this economic development was built. The observation of inequality

[82] Kenneth Good is an Australian political scientist who worked as a lecturer of Political Studies at the University of Botswana for more than fifteen years. He was deported from the country to South Africa on May 31, 2005, following his public critique of the Botswana government and his claim that Botswana was run by a secretive elite.

comes as no surprise, considering economist Kalyan Sanyal's theory on the relationship between capitalist development and poverty. Sanyal reminds us of the inseparable relationship between the two in that "each provides the condition of existence of the other. While resources flowing from the capitalist space allow the development state and other agencies to engage in anti-poverty programs, these interventions in turn legitimize the existence of capital by taking care of its castaways" (175). These castaways constitute a space outside the capital's realm – the space of poverty.

Good applies the theory to Botswana in his article, "The State and Extreme Poverty in Botswana," which adamantly contends that the deeply rooted extreme poverty, especially among the San (an ethnically marginalized group), is "bound up intimately with economic development" (185).[83] He demonstrates how poverty among the San is indigenously constructed and a direct consequence of inequalities. Good contextualizes Sanyal's theory to posit that poverty in Botswana "exists and grows in relation to its opposites, wealth and power" (185) and must therefore be analyzed through the lens of Sanyal's theory. In a more recent article, entitled "Public Policy and San Displacement in Liberal Democratic Botswana," local historian Teedzani Thapelo also observes that the San's marginalized position remains a function of the accumulation of wealth by the dominant classes (93–94).

Since art is a living product of a living society and often mirrors the characteristics of the society within which it is conceived, I wish to explore and bring to

[83] The terms "The San," "KhoiSan," and "Basarwa" are used interchangeably in the study to refer to the non-Tswana speakers of click languages belonging to both Khoi and San groupings found in Botswana. Historically, these are regarded as the first inhabitants of Botswana and Southern Africa in general. While the term KhoiSan is often used to refer to both subgroupings, Monaka (2006) reminds us that Khoi and San are different linguistically and culturally. The term "Basarwa" is mostly used by Setswana speakers to refer to both cultural groups, but is regarded as a superficial and homogenizing nomenclature. In this study, all these labels are used to refer to these traditional hunter-gatherer ethnic groups of Botswana.

light how these conditions of inequality and false democracy shape the work of different popular theatre practitioners. As this project aligns itself with the well-being of marginalized members of society such as those hampered by inequality in the distribution of wealth and power relations, what follows below is a discussion of the different routes taken by popular theatre practitioners to address and challenge the issues surrounding marginalized people. I argue that these routes are influenced by the artist's perception of their relationship with the state. Having discussed *His Excellency* as an explicit performance of obeisance to the state, it is important to look at other performances and perspectives that point to different kinds of relationships.

Moremogolo's performance, which was fully sponsored by the government's Ministry of Health, is indicative of a domestication whereby the artist fully aligns himself with the state in defining the causes and solutions to alcoholism as a social and health issue. While YOHO's performance is an example of how artists appeal for patronage, Moremogolo demonstrates what occurs after an artist wins the state's financial support. Moremogolo's performance works as a mouthpiece of the state's message, even to the detriment of the performance group's community, as the community's perspectives are excluded from the narrative of the performance. Although the artistic quality of Moremogolo's performance is evident, the group's continued sponsorship from the government has resulted in an expected relationship of patronage where the artist and the state play the roles of loyal service to the state and generous support of the artist for this loyalty.[84]

[84] Moremogolo prides itself on the fact that it has been the recipient of the coveted annual Presidential Award for best theatre group for three consecutive years: 2008, 2009, and 2010. This pride is indicated by the statement in their profile: "The only Theatre Group with Presidential Best Group Award, Three years in succession since 2008," which is accompanied by a picture of the President of Botswana

Moremogolo's Alcohol Play as Evidence of the Domestication of Art

"Community theatre practitioners depend on the funders' money for their daily survival and administration of their theatre groups or organisations. Desperation and the need to live have forced them to accept any funds available. This has turned theatre practitioners into vessels that transport and propagate donors' messages, thoughts and ideas and in turn sidelined the needs and aspirations of the vast majority of the population of whom they are part." (Rabotsima)

Moremogolo's alcohol play is yet more evidence of state and theatre practitioner collaboration toward combating alcohol abuse as a social malady faced by a large majority of the nation. However, this collaboration is not without problems.

As discussed in chapter two, one of the greatest critiques of popular theatre as a mode of communication lies in its paradoxical nature; it is thus a dual-edged entity with the potential to liberate and domesticate at once. The potential to liberate lies in "ownership" as a central element of popular theatre – ideally putting communities at the center of the communication process. This means that the process of popular theatre creation should emerge from the community's active involvement in identifying and prioritizing problems, reflecting on the causes, and communicating these through theatre with the view to helping solve the issues. As a theatre practitioner and director of Mama Theatre Group, Rabotsima is adamant that this ideological and pedagogical concern of popular theatre is undermined by funders; in a personal interview, he stated that these funders "do not value the community's ownership and involvement in identifying problems, causes and solutions to the subject matter. This renders theatre into donor mouth puppets." Unfortunately, communities – as "target groups" of these donors and their puppets – are at the receiving end of donor-controlled messages. When popular

awarding Moremomogolo's director a check for the amount P25, 000 (about $3,247). In addition, as I discuss in Chapter 3, Moremogolo is cited by Phenyo Sebonego as one of the beneficiaries of the Alcohol Levy.

theatre takes the form of a "theatre for the people" as opposed to a theatre "by and with the people," it becomes what Markus Missen terms a mode of inclusion where decisions are made by others (14), or a theatre of domestication, a theatre that silences as it tries to liberate. This contradicts popular theatre's initial commitment to promote communities' independent thinking. I argue that, in the case of Botswana, Rabotsima's statements indicate that this domestication is to a large extent due to the state's support of art embodied by funding.

Based on performances such as Moremogolo's and artists' statements, the research points to a type of collaboration that Ngugi terms the state's appropriation of the magic power of art through the co-option of artists (30). As I argue in chapter three, Moremogolo's play of alcohol abuse is infused with didactic messages that blame the victims for their ailments and positions of poverty. The moralistic representation is backed by the Ministry of Health representative's expository speech, which directly holds the youth responsible for the alcohol abuse in the community. In this sense, the performance becomes a circulation of the state's perspective of alcoholism and the affected communities, or a performance of the representative's speech. In the interview, Rabotsima's said, "Tell me, what then is the difference between such [moralistic] theatrical messages that echo the views of the state and the government officials' speeches?"[85] According to Rabotsima, when artists take this "preachy" route, they engage in a narrative of undermining and insulting audience intelligence. Furthermore, such moralizing points to a contradiction and shift from the initial impetus of popular theatre in Botswana, as expressed by Lesolobe: popular theatre was a much more meaningful tool of communication with communities than the long and boring government official

[85] In our discussion about the future of community based theatre in Botswana.

speeches, which did not factor in communities' views. Thus, by using the popular theatre to echo the government's speech, Moremogolo destroys this purpose of the theatre and its works become a less meaningful tool of communication with the community.

Such performances substantiate my claim that popular theatre in Botswana generally operates within the larger national program of Vision 2016. By extension, this means that, to a large extent, popular theatre is used by the state to communicate the ideas behind its aspirations outlined in the Vision. The observed pattern that arises from these collaborations is that the state, artists, and communities don't always agree on the causes or solutions to the problems that plague the nation. This relationship among state, theatre practitioner, and community was beautifully captured by Lesolobe in a personal interview:

> A lot of problems arise today from state funded theatre activities. One such problem is the relationship between the communities (as audiences) and the theatre practitioner (as agent), the audience and the state, and the theatre practitioner and the state. In all these relationships, the state becomes the undisputed winner as it controls the projects financially.

Lesolobe is alluding to the state's conscious exercise of control over the theatre practitioner and in turn over the communities. Thus, because of financial support, the state has the upper hand in not only deciding what problems are addressed (according to how they fit in the national program), but also how they are addressed. Because they are addressed from the perspective of the state, the narratives resulting from this partnership are official narratives. Moremogolo's play on alcohol abuse demonstrates such domestication, as the performance perpetuates the Ministry of Health's discourse of

blame in its focus on the effects of and solutions to the problem of alcohol abuse. The approach is a superficial way of confronting the problem and thus yields superficial solutions. As I discuss in chapter three, the underlying question that the performance should address with communities and audiences is why alcoholism exists in the first place. Is it by accident or design that the performance lacks this crucial discussion? Additionally, the performance narrative seems to remove the medical aspect of alcoholism. By focusing on the social aspect (superficial causes and solutions), the narrative sidelines those already addicted to alcohol. I am tempted to argue that this exclusion is government's avoidance to address the limitation of rehabilitation and counselling centers in place.

By not engaging in a conversation with the audience about why they drink, the performance ceases to be a tool of communication and operates instead as a declaration. Unfortunately, because theatre practitioners rely on funding for survival, they can do nothing but watch as they and their art are transformed into transporters of the state's messages until they embody the didactic needs of the state. In this way, Moremogolo's performance demonstrates how theatre becomes an instrument and servant of the state.

Ngugi argues that "the mirror, even a bad mirror, may be focused on the intended object, but it is surprising how often it will reflect other objects around and which might make those viewing the scene see more into it than they were intended" (30–31). Moremogolo's treatment of alcohol abuse also sheds light on the issue of domestic violence in Setswana culture. The performance, however, reduces the problem of domestic violence (particularly gender based violence) to being nothing but an effect of alcohol abuse. In fact, Moremogolo's performance zooms in on alcohol abuse in such a

way that the abuse suffered by the female protagonist is merely a tool for persuading the viewing audience to stop drinking – as if by ceasing their alcohol use, they could cease punishing the female protagonist. In Moremogolo's performance, domestic violence is only a peripheral theme, as it is witnessed very briefly at the beginning. However, every other plot point stems from the abuse as much if not more so than from alcohol abuse, although the didactic messages of the performance would like us to believe otherwise. Through the pointed lack of discussion, the unintended issue in some ways becomes the focal point. By being silent about the larger social structures that construct and perpetuate masculinity as dominance over a woman, the performance silences the viewing audiences – particularly women, the victims of gendered crimes. By supporting such a skewed view of the problem, arguably, the state is implicitly "blessing the art that gives the faintest of voices to silence and anoint it as the desirable model" (Ngugi 30).[86] Thus, in silencing the audience, such state-controlled narratives not only take the power of the artist, but remove the communities from being beneficiaries of popular theatre interventions.

This state of powerlessness exacted on the artist and the "targeted population" is described by Rabotsima as follows:

> The client [the funder] will engage Mama Theatre and give a theme around HIV and AIDS, for example, in which the play is to be created. Before the play goes for outreach, the client will come to preview the play and it is then that they will decide what goes in the play and what doesn't. This suggests that there is always potential for different forms of censorship."

[86] As the government-anointed model, Moremogolo is further supported by the fact that the company is cited as one of the beneficiaries of the controversial Alcohol Levy discussed in the previous chapter.

As he further notes in the epigraph of the chapter, this censorship results in both external and self-silencing of artists, which in turn silences their communities. Out of desperation for funding (as shown in *His Excellency*) and fear of funder-imposed censorship, some theatre companies resort to self-censorship to avoid angering the funder - yet another type of domestication. Hence, just like YOHO, Moremogolo exemplifies a state/artist patronage relationship. Bound by loyalty, Moremogolo subsequently joins the state in disseminating messages to facilitate Vision 2016. While Rabotsima agrees with the need to join arms with the state for the benefit of communities, he is concerned with the dangers of narratives that do not allow specific communities to interpret and integrate Vision 2016 into the context of their reality. As *The Creature* reveals, communities do not always have the same interpretations as the state; in fact, these interpretation mismatches sometimes result in direct conflict between the state and the communities. I claim that such conflicts become contributing factors to conditions that simultaneously shape the work of the artist and define a different relationship among state, artist, and community. The relationship depends on the artist's response to the conflict.

Mama Theatre's *The Creature*: An Artist's Response to the State's Sedentarization of the San

Unlike YOHO and Moremogolo, Mama Theatre points to a different relationship among the artist, state, and community and reveals how artists can use their art to liberate communities from the state's terror. Mama Theatre's play *The Creature* demonstrates another type of state and theatre practitioner relationship: that of discord. Even though the state representatives at the DAC deny that conflict exists between the DAC and Mama Theatre, Mama Theatre's artists argue that discord often emanates between practitioners

and the state when the former's critical reflection methodologies with their audiences generate unintended consequences, particularly in cases where the state is identified as the root cause of the problems affecting communities. This claim is substantiated by my encounter with one female artist, who asked not to be identified and whom I'll therefore call Tsholo.

In front of *Nando's* at Riverwalk mall, Tsholo and I sit facing each other at a restaurant table.[87] After enthusiastically sharing the different projects she has been involved with as an active theatre practitioner, it is easy to see why she is one of the few female actors to have (in the past) occupied the positions of director and assistant director in a theatre company. She is a very outspoken and vibrant young woman. However, this demeanor changes as soon as I ask her about her experience with government funded projects and, in particular, if she's ever experienced any conflict with a government department. She begins by praising the government for its support for theatre, but is very quick to admit instances of subtle conflict and censorship. She gives an example of a past project on AIDS and youth, describing how the funding ministry prevented them from using male members of parliament as examples of wealthy older men who use their statuses to lure younger girls into unprotected sexual relations, thus exposing them to AIDS.

Recalling the moment, she moves toward me, lowers her torso onto the table, looks from side to side, as if making sure that no one is listening, and in an emphatic whisper states, "We were told not to use the word minister at all!" This refusal by those in power to be depicted in undesirable images is an explicit censorship that in turn domesticates theatre by ignoring and silencing artists' observations and thus silencing the

[87] A popular South African relaxed chicken dining restaurant with a Portuguese theme.

communities whom these artists represent. This is the type of silencing and mouth-piecing that Rabotsima references in the epigraph. Tsholo's gesture of whispering and leaning forward particularly points to the power of the state in her fear of being overheard – the state is an unchallenged force in this relationship. In this patronage relationship whereby the artist views him or herself as the state's laborer, the Botswana state abandons its practice of *therisanyo* (consultation) and the popular theatre's principle of "community participation." Funders are concerned with being politically compliant and on the part of the state, which means portraying the state and its guardians in a positive light (Rabotsima). I maintain that this concealing and silencing of alternative views is part of a bid to protect and sustain Botswana's image of stability and peace. Therefore, in order to avoid such domestication, some theatre companies must choose to divert from state funding. Mama Theatre's *The Creature* is one such example.

Written by Thomas Mpoeleng, *The Creature* is a one act play that was performed by Mpho Rabotsima (as the Creature) at The Moving Theatre in Gaborone on April 27 and 28, 2007. The play is about a gorilla-like Creature that is chained to a tree throughout the performance. The theatre is set as a circus, and audience becomes the people who have paid to come and see this caged circus animal. The performance then takes the form of a one-way conversation: the Creature begins to talk to the audience, whom it of course addresses as circus attendees. The Creature angrily accuses the people of deriving pleasure from its misery, asking them how they could pay money to entertain themselves by watching an oppressed animal. It explains that it has been forced to live in a foreign shelter and eat foreign food, all in the name of "civilization." It further reminds the audience and its owners that while they are busy trying to "civilize" it by forcing it to

change and forego its identity, they should take time to think about what this civilization has done to other members of society and the world at large: the wars and genocides happening worldwide. Shaking the fence in anger, the Creature implicates the audience in these social maladies:

> Death, rape, and torture waiting around every twist and turn. Your egotistical leaders have fallen into insanity, into some kind of madness that is even beyond your capacity to understand. Those in Rwanda told their offspring that they are not Rwandans. They told them that they are Hutus and Tutsis with prehistoric differences to resolve."

In this way, he is asking his capturers, the human race, to study its own destructive patterns, which thrive when marginalizing the weak. The Creature views the people's eagerness to change it into something else as a way of controlling it. He does not want to be controlled and constantly asks, "Who said I am not capable of taking control of my life? It is my life. If I do silly things – fall off the edge and kill myself – well, that is what I did to myself...so what?" The Creature relentlessly reminds the audience that he does not want to live in a cage – he wants to be free to live where he pleases, to hunt for food, and to live his normal life. The Creature begs to be freed from the bondage of "civilization." Mockingly, he points to his capturers' vulnerability, which masquerades as power.

According to Mpoeleng, *The Creature* represents all individuals who have been stripped of their individuality and liberty. The message he wanted to bring is that, "regardless of one's background, *motho ke motho* (a human being is a human being), which roughly translates to, 'All human beings are equal.' Humanity is more important

than where one comes from and how they lived." He further notes that the aim of the play is twofold – to make people aware of what it is like to suppress one's identity and to remind people to celebrate each other's uniqueness.

In a detailed description of the play's relevance, Mpoeleng writes:

> We forget that in the great scheme of things humanity is greater than the issues that drive it. Cultural diversity carries with us today the impact of our past. Hatred takes away humanity, it consumes individuals. Victims hate oppressors and vice versa. This play looks at how we have created a culture of intolerance: a culture in which those who do not look like us, speak like us, think like us or have as much as we have are less human. *"Le a reng ne Lesarwa le, or le le tsaya kae Lekwerekwere?"* It looks at the struggle of those who are put in boxes, labeled then forced to change their identity and even forced into a civilization they don't see as civilization. Does the case between our government and the Basarwa at the High Court ring a bell? How do we forget that humanity does not have nationality? … A human being will always be a human being. You don't just attack, rape, burn and commit all sorts of atrocities on other human beings just because they were not born in your country.
>
> Our present is filled with icons, political, economic or social jargons. To heal these political, economic or social jargons we need to create a culture of peace and focus on the bigger picture. How do we tolerate and help each other instead of judging each other? Judgment is always going to be biased by our perceptions. These perceptions are influenced by our

> experiences and the way we perceive truth. The final question posed by this work could be: WHO ARE WE TO JUDGE EACH OTHER IN THE FIRST PLACE? (Mpoeleng. E-mail interview)

Rabotsima, the performer, adds that *The Creature* is an interrogation of our tendencies to judge others and dwell on issues that are of no value to our lives. He further explains that the play was a reflection of the political landscape at the time; it is about the importance of respecting other people's self-defined identities. In his words, some of the main questions that the performance asks is, "What is the point of development and civilization if it harms others? Who benefits from this development?" (Rabotsima).

As co-creators of *The Creature*, Mpoeleng and Rabotsima intended to critique all types of discrimination based on ethnicity, class, political inclinations, and nationality, among others. Rabotsima's statement that "victims hate oppressors and vice versa" suggests that these discriminations, together with the subsequent hostilities, are embedded in power relations between the powerful and the subordinate. In particular, the line "*Le a reng ne Lesarwa le*?" which translates to "What is this Lesarwa saying?" is a pejorative phrase and hence very offensive.[88] The "*Lesarwa*" should be "Mosarwa," which is a person belonging to the hunter-gatherer ethnic group found in Botswana and Southern Africa. They are one of the most highly marginalized ethnic groups in Botswana and one of the poorest members of society. The label "*Lesarwa*" has been

[88] This is because in Botswana, ethnic groups belong to noun class one (Mo-) and class two (Ba-). These two noun classes exclusively contain names for people (although not all human names are found here); with class one being singular while class two is plural. Other classes that contain names for people – in addition to non-human names – are class five (Le-) and class six (Ma-), with the former being singular while the latter is plural. It is important to note that human names found here are mostly for professions such as *lepodisi* (police officer) and *lesole* (soldier). The other category of human names found here are those connoting undesirable human traits such as *legodu* (thief), *lebelete* (a promiscuous person), and *leferefere* (swindler/liar).

historically used as a derogative term by the dominant Tswana ethnic groups to ridicule the hunter-gatherers, specifically and generally applying to any behavior deemed undesirable, primitive, or associated with this ethnic group. Thus, the play critiques those in power who use their privileged positions to disempower and oppress those who are marginalized because of ethnicity, nationality, and social class.

The Creature in the play asks, "Who are you to tell me what civilization is?" Just so, those at the receiving end of such discrimination and oppression question the foreign standards used to judge them. In this way, the performance is told from the perspective of the victims. However, though the Creature is caged and chained to a tree, it is not helpless and it refuses to lose itself – its identity – even when being blackmailed by its owner. Hence it exercises what agency it has by continuously refusing to be controlled to the extent possible.

Contextualizing *The Creature*: The Controversy Surrounding the Relocation of Basarwa from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR)

According to DITSHWANELO (The Botswana Centre for Human Rights) report of 2007, Basarwa have inhabited Southern Africa for at least 40,000 years, which qualifies them as indigenous people of Southern Africa. DITSHWANELO further writes that the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR), covering about 52,800 square meters (about 20,387 square miles), was established by the British colonial regime in 1960s, primarily to protect the habitat, the wildlife, and the traditional lifestyles of its residents. These residents comprised mainly the G/wikwe, the G/naake (two Basarwa groups), and a small section of the Bakgalagadi (Tswana speakers) who had co-existed with Basarwa before the area was established as a reserve (Keitseope Nthomang). The area continued to

be reserved strictly for this population even after Botswana received her independence in 1966, and so the Basarwa were at liberty to continue their gathering and hunting lifestyle.

However, about two decades later, the Botswana government engaged in a project of economically developing all its citizens, including those in the CKGR. This "development" serves the state's building of a homogenous and peaceful nation through a denial of ethnic difference by collapsing all ethnic groups into the national culture of Batswana. The homogenizing is evidenced by the state's refusal to acknowledge Basarwa as an indigenous ethnic group; it argued that "Botswana is inhabited by many different ethnic groups that occupied the geographical areas of present-day Botswana at different times in history" (DITSHWANELO). This social-engineering makes it easier for the emerging ruling elite to control and relegate Basarwa to marginalization. However, careful to protect its reputation as a democratic state, the Botswana government claimed that the relocation was actually a way of accommodating the Basarwa and argued that their lifestyles had changed from nomadic to sedentary. According to the government, this sedentary lifestyle was no longer compatible with the promotion of wildlife conservation in the reserve. To validate its perception, the government created a task force of government officials in 1985 to "investigate perceived changes with a view to providing information that would facilitate decision-making on environmental protection and wildlife conservation" (Nthomang 54).

Indeed, the fact finding report confirmed the government's suspicions that the Basarwa had adopted a new lifestyle based on livestock rearing, which posed a threat to wildlife, according to the government. Frankly, I find the composition of the Fact Finding team questionable: why weren't ordinary citizens, especially the concerned Basarwa,

involved in the research? Questionable as the team was, the government used its report to validate its decision to relocate the Basarwa from the CKGR to New Xade and Kaudwane, west and south of the reserve, respectively. The first removals began in 1997 and continued until 2001, when social services (water, school, and medical post) to the region were terminated (Nthomang 55). In the eyes of the government, this termination was nothing but a simple transfer of services from the reserve to the new settlements outside the reserve. The government's position as published in the 1986 Ministry of Commerce and Industry Circular 1 was as follows:

- The reserve could not carry both Basarwa and wildlife – wildlife and people could not coexist. The lifestyle of the residents of CKGR had changed over the years; they were no longer nomadic traditional hunter-gatherer but were more sedentary. This had resulted in conflict of land use between wildlife conservation and human settlements.
- It was neither economically and administratively feasible nor sustainable to provide services to scattered populations within the CKGR. Therefore, any developments in Old Xade and other settlements in the CKGR were frozen because they had no prospect of becoming economically viable.

This second point really reveals the government's primary fixation: economic, growth-centered development at the expense of Basarwa communities' well-being and human rights. Thus, to the state, capital development took precedence over human development in this instance. With this skewed, if not self-centered, view, the government anticipated a smooth relocation of the CKGR residents and social services. Indeed, according to some government reports, some people relocated voluntarily and

were compensated for the disturbance. However, the relocation exercise meant different things to the concerned communities and their national and international supporters. To some residents, the relocation was an act of betrayal by the government and a reversal of the agreement made by the colonial and the independent Botswana government. The relocation was seen as a forced removal by a section of the CKGR population. Pointing to the heterogeneity inherent in any community, marginalized or not, Nthomang rightly advises us that, contrary to international and local media reports, not all the residents of CKGR resisted relocation (54). That is, while some residents voluntarily moved, appreciating the compensation as a gesture of government's generosity, others remained, finding the compensation inadequate and not equivalent to the value of their land. This demonstration of the close ties of the Basarwa to their land is further substantiated by Nthomang's observation in his research: those who were reported to have voluntarily relocated have either permanently returned or make constant visits to the reserve (56). Those who resisted were dissatisfied with the manner in which the relocation was carried out, arguing that there was no consultation and that the government was merely implementing a decision that it had already made. These concerns demonstrate that the Botswana government's commitment to the culture of *therisanyo* (consultation) has waned. As one resisting the removal, Motuakgomo Zandu said in an interview with Dqae Qare, "Why does the government want to move me like a parcel? The government found me here at independence in 1966." The overall position of those resisting what they saw as forced and involuntary relocation was a dissatisfaction with the lack of consultation and, most importantly, the loss of their ancestral land, which was a tangible representation of their history and identity. The relocation was a reminder of their

alienation not just from their physical space, but also from many of the markers by which they had come to define themselves. Their main argument was that the development and modernizing project of the government did not consider them; rather, the government's consideration of development over what the Basarwa deemed to be their best interests was actually a form of oppression and alienation – a human rights violation.

Subsequently, those who resisted the relocation sought support and advice from DITSHWANELO, which conducted its own fact finding mission in 1996. This mission culminated in a report entitled, "When Will This Moving Stop?" (Nthomang 55). The report countered that of the government and suggested that further negotiations were necessary. Evidently, this report fell on deaf ears, for the government proceeded with the removals. This sparked controversy and attracted support from various organizations, resulting in a 1998 Negotiation Team that included the CKGR committee, The First People of The Kalahari (FPK), the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities of Southern Africa (WIMSA), the Kuru Development Trust, the Botswana Council for Churches (BCC), and DITSHWANELO (Nthomang 57).[89] Negotiations between the Negotiation Team and government officials from the Ministry of Local Government and Lands and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks culminated in The Third Draft Management Plan (2001), which recognized the CKGR Basarwa and their indigenous knowledge. Just when the negotiations were beginning to bear fruit by producing an

[89] FPK is a local advocacy organization in Botswana working toward protecting the rights of the indigenous San ethnic group. The organization was formed in 1991 following the CKGR controversy. WIMSA is a non-governmental network that coordinates and represents the interests of indigenous and highly marginalized San people throughout southern Africa. WIMSA works to develop representative San councils that lobby on behalf of San communities living in Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, and Angola. It gives communities a voice to carry out their own advocacy and campaigning work. Kuru Development Trust is a community owned development organization that aims to improve the quality of life among the marginalized San communities in Botswana; it is active in a dozen remote San communities in the western and northern parts of the country.

agreement that clearly stipulated how settlements in the reserve would have community user zones that would allow residents to exercise their hunting and gathering rights and in turn embark on income generating projects in these zones, the government, without consultation with residents, produced an alternate management plan. To everyone's surprise, the new plan prohibited not only hunting and gathering, but the rearing of livestock and, by extension, no economic opportunities for the Basarwa in the reserve.

The government's unceremonious withdrawal from the negotiations that stood to benefit Basarwa by providing them with economic empowerment according to with their cultural and preferred lifestyle indicates the government's protection of its fundamental concern: constructing and sustaining the poverty of the Basarwa so as to benefit from it. Desperate and determined to implement its plan, the government terminated social services to the reserve in 2001. Those who remained were allowed to remain, but those who had relocated were no longer allowed into the reserve. DITSHWANELO writes that, after the termination of social services, relatives of those still residing in the reserve were not allowed to bring them water. This could not be anything but a forced removal. This act took the CKGR controversy to its peak, further attracting international interventions that led to a court case between the Botswana government and the Basarwa of CKGR.

The court was directed to determine whether or not it was unlawful for the government to end essential services to the residents; whether the government had an obligation to restore these services; whether the residents had been in possession of their land and were deprived of it forcibly; and whether the government's refusal to issue game licenses to the residents and allow them to enter the CKGR was unconstitutional. Four years after the eviction, in 2006, the Botswana court ruled in favor of Basarwa, stating

that the eviction was illegal and re-granting those willing the right to continue to live and return to their ancestral lands in the reserve.

Despite the court victory, the boreholes that had been sealed by the government upon eviction were still sealed, and residents campaigned to have them opened again. "Cultural Survival" reports that, although the San were not entitled to either reopen old boreholes or drill a new ones, the government drilled new boreholes for the wildlife (). Following further local and international interventions and court appeals, the San won the borehole victory in September 2011 when the court ruled that they had the right to access water, which lead to the reopening of the Mothomelo borehole in the reserve.

Discussion: The Creature and the CKGR Controversy

With this socio-political context in mind, *The Creature* is not only a creative mirror of the CKGR controversy; it is a critique of the state's oppression of its citizens. The title *The Creature* mirrors a statement made by the then-President Festus Mogae: "How can you have a stone-age creature continue to exist in the age of computers?" (Oliver, qtd in Good 202). Good writes that Mogae made this statement in 1997 in support of the removal of Basarwa from the CKGR. Interestingly, the producers of *The Creature* were not aware of this statement.

Nevertheless, with this play, Mama Theatre demonstrates the argument made by some African scholars and practitioners that in Africa, the notion of "arts for the sake of arts" does not exist. Furthermore, Ngugi writes that, as historical subjects in their societies, artists shape and are being shaped by their context (28–29). Therefore, the performance is a demonstration of how some Batswana theatre practitioners are

influenced by their socio-political environment and how they align themselves with the oppressed communities. *The Creature* points to how the state and the artist fight for the voice of the community: one to take it away and the other to give it. However, it appears that in its desperate mission to align itself with the oppressed section of the Basarwa, Mama Theatre falls in the trap of a simplistic reading of communities: using individual artists to represent the view of the whole community.

As observed in the performance, the caged Creature is condemned to a condition of physical and expressional confinement. While the Botswana state uses the whole country as its space of power performance, the artist uses the moving space theatre as his or her space of performance. It is within this small space that the artist gives the oppressed a voice with which to mock its oppressor.

It's important to note that *The Creature* was not funded, although the group tried, with no success, to solicit funding from the DAC and other NGO's. According to Rabotsima, the group viewed the CKGR controversy as a topical and pressing matter that could not wait for the delay tactics of government's funding negotiations. Subsequently Mama Theatre could not directly work with the concerned communities (the CKGR is about 686 km/426 mi from Ramotswa and neither artist owned a car). In order to collect the views of the CKGR residents, they worked closely with those who had worked with these communities, such as DITSHWANELO and private media representatives. These claims of cooperation are corroborated by the similarities I observed between the Creature's concerns and those of the resistant Basarwa, as quoted in the various reports I read. It is significant that, although financial support is imperative for the survival of popular theatre and government support creates a context of censorship in Botswana,

certain theatre practitioners are still committed to representing oppressed communities. However, the practitioners' subsequent failure to work directly with the communities to a large extent yields a kind of silencing when partial accounts pose as representations of the whole communities' views.

As partial as the representation may be, the play is a depiction of the subjugation of the majority by the ruling minority. The artistic cage and the CKGR forced removal are metaphors for the Botswana postcolonial state and representations of how "the state performs its ritual of power...by being able to move people between the various enclosures within the national territorial space" (Ngugi 60). This performance of power by the state is manifested in different situations, as discussed below.

Fact Finding Mission: A Hegemonic View

The first enactment is observed through the hegemonic lens that is used to assess the situation of Basarwa in the CKGR. As discussed above, the fact finding mission team tasked with the investigation of the changes in the reserve solely comprised government officials. Thus, the development project that claimed to benefit a community excluded in its planning the very community that it was supposed to benefit. While this act may be initially read as genuine naivety on the government's part, its abrupt withdrawal from cooperating with the Negotiation Team in 1998 indicates otherwise. This act strikes a tune with James Scott's broader theory of "social engineering" and control of the state. In particular, in theorizing states' efforts to permanently "sedentarize" its hunter-gatherers, Scott argues that "hunter-gatherers, Gypsies, vagrants, homeless people, itinerants, runaway slaves, and serfs have always been a thorn in the side of states" because they are hard to control (1). Therefore, many states resort to

arranging the population in ways that simplify the classic state functions of taxation, conscriptions, and prevention of rebellion – making a society legible (2). It is this high modernist attempt of government to gain an easy and strong grip of its subjects and natural environment that led to simplifications contained in permanent places, among others. Scott reminds us that this synoptic view only serves the modern statecraft; they are abridged maps aligned with state power. In the play, this social engineering is evidenced by the words of the Creature when he says, "It is you who said this piece here is D.R.C, Somalia, Burundi, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and all those other hideous names you could think of. Killing grounds, that is what they are! Death, rape, and torture waiting around every twist and turn." This demonstrates the human tragedy that is often a product of these social engineering practices. Interestingly, Mama Theatre dissimulates its trenchant critique of the state by disguising it as a critique of imperialism – yet another strategy used by artists to simultaneously challenging and avoiding conflict with those in power.

According to the Creature, the state's creation of maps as state spaces serves the state to the detriment of inhabitants of the new spaces. In reality, some of the Basarwa who resisted all relocation efforts had this to say: "Kaudawane is a death trap. Our people in Kaudawane are suffering from TB and dying in large numbers...we want to stay in Gugamma and we shall remain and die here...this is our ancestral land" (Nthomang 61). This indicates just part of the destructive nature of these state re-organizations of citizen subjects.

Thus, Scott explains why a development project that is supposed to benefit a community excludes the very community that it is supposed to benefit: certain kinds of

states, driven by utopian plans, authoritatively disregard the values, desires, and objections of their subjects. According to Scott, excluding local communities is the main reason why such high modernist attempts to improve human life fail. In the play, the Creature curses, "Idiots...why don't you look upon us as creatures with needs of our own?" Thus, the play points to the asymmetrical power relations and rigidity of the state decision-making structures that undermine Basarwa citizenship.

The power of the state is felt throughout the performance of the play, in an audience mostly made up of invited print media representatives such as *The Botswana Gazette* and *Botswana Daily News*, private and government newspapers, respectively, and regular theatre practitioners and supporters, as well as the general public. Rabotsima explains that they made sure that each major Tswana ethnic group was represented in the audience. Even though no government official was visibly present (despite having received invitations), I find this audience choice very meaningful, given the role that these dominant Tswana groups play in the marginalization of the Basarwa. The state's omniscient power critiqued by the Creature on stage is expressed in a different way by the audience: even though the Creature's verbalized and embodied curses, mockeries, and anger are generally met with the audience's clapping and nodding gesturing agreement with and understanding of the Creature's frustration, the discomfort among audience members is conspicuous. For instance, during the post-performance discussions, Rabotsima, as the facilitator, asks, "Does the case between our government and the Basarwa at the High Court ring a bell?" To that question, there is a general reluctance to participate and some audience members either look down or at each other – clearly avoiding eye contact with Rabotsima and, by extension, avoiding a public debate of the

issue. Most of the post-performance discussions are limited to statements such as, "This is true" or "this is not fair" and praising the artistic skills of the performer. The audience seems fearful of taking positions in a fresh controversy that involves the state – further pointing to the power of the state over its citizens, if not the terror they hold for it.

However, some audience members seem free to share their views, as evidenced when Lesolobe in a casual discussion of the performance, said:

> The message of the play is loud and clear. When everyone just saw *The Creature* as a play about "a creature," I saw a satire about Basarwa, a true protest theatre production capturing the main idea of Basarwa vs. Government: please leave us the way we are, we will not change even when you abuse us.

His response points to the style, content, and socio-political statement of the performance, as understood by this young theatre practitioner. Another audience member, a middle aged woman from Mochudi village, said:

> *Nna motshameko o ke bona o busolosa mowa wa bojammongo o o tswang kgakala o re aga re le Batswana jaaka Setswana se re 'matlo go sha mabapi'. Re tshwanetse go ema le Basarwa jaaka Batswana jaaka rona. Mathata ke gore o kare mowa o wa bojammogo o a nyelela mo go rona Batswana*. (For me the play is asking us to tap into the spirit of communality that identifies and bind us as Batswana. As the saying goes, "When a house catches fire, so do the ones surrounding it." We have to support Basarwa as Batswana like us. The problem is that this spirit of communality is slowly fading.)

Thus, even though most audience members were reluctant to engage in a public debate during the performance, the off-stage responses demonstrate that the performance made them ponder the situation of the Basarwa, particularly what their individual and collective contribution is and most importantly what they can do to change the situation. These responses suggest the audience's competence in playing their role as a participator in theatre.

As I enquire more about the general reactions to the performance, one female theatre practitioner, Motshidisi Makgalemele, remembers a review made by the then-Maitisong Hall director, David Slatter, in the Maitisong Newsletter.[90] According to Motshidiso, Slatter praised *The Creature* for both its aesthetic and political value: for going beyond common moralistic messages of HIV/AIDS (referring to government's fascination – pushing the Vision's mission- with HIV/AIDS information dissemination messages) by demanding critical thinking from the audience. Additionally, Slatter commended Mama Theatre for its bravery in engaging with a controversial issue such as the CKGR case. I believe that the artist demonstrates his role in society in the way that Slatter describes, in order to sensitize his community and engage them in addressing the social ills that oppress them.

Development or Oppression?

"Our people in Kaudwane are suffering from TB and dying in large numbers and the government calls this development? ...if the government wants to develop us, then development should be brought in here to our land." (CKGR resident qtd in Nthomang 61)

[90] Unfortunately I could not access this review due to a change of management at Maitisong.

Vs.

"How can you have a stone-age creature continue to exist in the age of computers?" (President Mogae qtd in Good 202).

In addition to the hegemonic view of the initial fact finding mission, the Botswana government also performs an act of power over the Basarwa of CKGR in the justification given for the forced removal. The government's hegemonic view of the Fact Finding Mission that guided the CKGR forced removal is cast in a discourse of development, progress, and civilization. However, according to the concerned Basarwa, this act was a living example of how the state institution becomes the ground of both the freedoms and un-freedoms of its subjects. To the Creature and the Basarwa, what the government defines as "development" translates to oppression. Thus, the two quotations above represent the two contrasting notions of development that exist at the core of the CKGR controversy. The resistance of the Basarwa points to the limitations and flaws of the government's understanding, as well as its manner of implementing the plan. *The Creature* is an interrogation of the Botswana government's flawed view of development as the Creature takes the position of the oppressed Basarwa, attesting the state's disregard for his culture and identity in an effort to improve his life.

I maintain that this government-development intervention, although probably not intentionally insincere, was not only a state's demarcation of its performance space (the CKGR and the new state-designated settlements of New Xade and Kaudwane) – it was also tainted with and informed by the modernist ideology of economic growth-centered development, which is often used to define Botswana's success by scholars such as Samatar. This ideology views those it seeks to "civilize" as backward, as is made quite

clear in president Mogae's above statement in support of removal, in which he refers to Basarwa as "stone-age creatures." This view is further substantiated by Nthomang's assertion that, "According to the government, the action of removing the Basarwa from CKGR is justified because it is meant to help 'develop', 'civilize' and integrate them into mainstream society so that the Basarwa, like all Bantu groups, can enjoy the fruits of development' (60).[91] The resisting Basarwa responses to the supposed joy brought by these fruits is expressed by the Creature's emphatic rejection of them: "Eat them, go on and eat your long curved fruits. Eat them. I don't want them. I don't want anything from you." Additionally, as if responding to the president's negative attitude towards Basarwa, the Creature further states, "I cannot help myself for being who I am. It is my genetic nature.... Foolish, foolish...you fools failed to calculate that we creatures have secret thoughts too, that we have brains and emotions...that we creatures will forever be creatures." Hence, even though the Botswana government's intentions behind the relocation might have been to improve the well-being of the Basarwa, as discussed above, it is clear that its prescriptive development instead translated to oppression and suffering. This traumatic impact is captured by the Creature's plea, "Can't you see that you are hurting me? Look at these lines on my face.... Maybe if you had smiled and made a little conversation, I would have willingly opened up." The plea further points to the lack of consultation that accompanied the removal from the CKGR. It is because of this lack of a "conversation" that what the government views as "relocation," the resisting residents of the CKGR considers to be a "forced removal." The Creature further

[91] The Bantu groups here refer to all the hegemonic Tswana speaking ethnic groups that co-exist with Basarwa in Botswana. It is important to note that Basarwa remain the only ethnic group without a defined ethnic territory. Good aptly argues that this lack of land rights subjects the Basarwa to government relocations (191).

considers this exercise of state power and control over its weak citizen subjects when he says, "The weak, for their weakness, always have to suffer and for that, you deserve a round of applause."

It is thus evident that the fundamental flaw of the government's notion of development lies in its disregard for the cultural identity of Basarwa. A fundamental component of this cultural identity is a feeling of close ties to the land as hunter-gatherers. As mentioned above, land is a tangible representation of Basarwa history and identity, a primary source of human livelihood and sacred cultural heritage. Hence, the various resisting residents of the CKGR stated, "This is our ancestral land...development should be brought in here to our land" (Nthomang 61). From this quotation, the Basarwa's notion of development is clear: that development should follow those it is meant to serve, rather than the reverse. That is, the Basarwa's understanding of development is that humans should be its subjects, rather than its objects. By relocating Basarwa from the reserve as a way of "civilizing" them, the Botswana government alienated, excluded, and dispossessed them. This act, guided by the official synoptic view, matches Scott's contention that states resort to standardizing communities as an attempt to legitimize and simplify them (2). The overarching concerns are whether there is any good in a development that excludes the voices of those it is intended to serve and empower and who is served by the relocation and reconfiguration of the Basarwa: the Basarwa or the Botswana state?

A possible answer to the second question is found in the caged Creature's assertion:

> Master has given me all and nothing. When master taught me about the beauty of circus, master told me it could bring pleasure; tis you master, tis you who told me the show business could bring pure ecstasy…. Only later did I realize master was talking about thy own delight, for when I stand here naked before you to play your music, dance or sing in human tongues, you laugh your heads off.

Here, the Creature points to the failure of the heroic claims and promises that "development" will bring empowerment and fulfillment to Basarwa. Statements by some CKGR residents, such as "the relocation has impacted negatively on our livelihood...life at the settlement is hell, with many people dying of strange diseases like HIV/AIDS and most people have turned to alcoholism and violence" (Nthomang 61–62), give clear indications that the Creature is right – development did not yield its intended results. Instead, it led to human tragedy.

The Creature's line, "Only later did I realize master was talking about thy own delight" explicitly implicates the government in the suffering of the residents of the CKGR. According to this narrative, the government is the beneficiary of the so called "development." In fact, the health and social maladies (HIV/AIDS, alcoholism, and violence) cited by the Basarwa as threats to their well-being in the new settlement areas are the same major themes observed and explored in this dissertation. The Basarwa's view on the issues is crucial, as it implicates the state in the propagation of these issues; in the state-run settlement areas, the Basarwa encountered these issues, whereas in the refuge they did not. It is a strong counter narrative to the state-supported, victim-blaming

performances of Moremogolo and YOHO on alcoholism and the relationship between alcohol and HIV/AIDS.

Furthermore, the Creature's statement, "Maybe if you had smiled and made a little conversation, I would have willingly opened up" is a testimony that the state's hegemonic, top-down developmental schemes and interventions exclude the necessary perspectives and needs of its intended beneficiaries; such exclusion is "indeed a mortal threat to human well-being" (Scott 7). But perhaps, as the Creature insinuates, the underlying intended beneficiaries of such developments are not truly the beneficiaries stated by the state; rather, it is for the state and its elite operators who benefit at the expense of the people.

The Creature's statement in the above quotation finds resonance in Thapelo and Good's theories concerning the position of the Basarwa as an underclass as a pivotal element in the development and state formation of Botswana. Both scholars emphatically contend that the Basarwa's poverty is a construction that results from and is sustained by the dominant Tswana accumulation and economic development. One example of such exploitative constructions and a demonstration of state dominance that relegated Basarwa to marginalized positions is the continued and forced relocations from their ancestral land, such as the CKGR relocation plan discussed in this chapter.

Evicting the Basarwa from their familiar ancestral land against their will puts them in a place of cultural denigration, social exclusion, political disenfranchisement, and economic vulnerability. When Thapelo writes, "Maladjustment to alien social and economic institutions, structural occupations, unfamiliar physical terrain ideologies, and highly westernized world view dynamics or cosmologies invariably add more pain and

angst to their already stigmatized identities" (102), he suggests that such a move will contribute to the collapse of the Basarwa community. He goes on to point out that the result of such maladjustments is "ethnocidal genocide," as the Basarwa began to die in their new settlements. This claim is further supported by some residents of the CKGR, who termed the settlement New Xade to be a place of death, citing its high rates of TB and HIV/AIDS. Those who survived moved to neighboring urban centers to live as squatters, beggars, prostitutes, or providers of cheap labor. Good terms this particular construction of structural poverty and dependency "a system of Basarwa servitude," which he argues is as old as the formation of the Botswana state and has grown in importance and numbers with the expansion of cattle production (189). This is because the growth of the state was built upon key productive resources of land, labor, and cattle. Of these three resources, the Basarwa only possessed labor, and so they worked as herders for cattle-owning Tswana who exploited their labor.[92] Because the Basarwa lacked the knowledge and skills to effectively function and compete in the emerging commercial and highly commoditized society, they scored very low as effective actors and competitors in the market of cattle economy. As the dispossessed poor, they were unable to sell their labor as a commodity, which automatically put them in a space outside capital's realm, a space of poverty. Given that Botswana is a relatively rich country, the space of poverty that Basarwa occupy is a demonstration of Sanyal's theory that "poverty and deprivation may be a result of entitlement failure rather than non-

[92] It's important to note that the name "Basarwa" is a Setswana name given to the San by their Tswana speaking neighbors. The name is derived from "*Ba sa rua,*" which means, "Those who do not rear cattle," and is not necessarily favored by the group.

availability of commodities" (178).[93] What is observed in Botswana's case is a situation of poverty in the midst of plenty. Because the Basarwa are not entitled to the same commodities as the dominant Tswana groups, they are among an impoverished minority. With such limited chances of success, they essentially relied on the state's poverty eradication programs, which included The Remote Area Development Programme (RADP) of 1978, offered through the Ministry of Local Government and Lands.[94] The lack of access to commodity understandably creates a permanent dependency of the Basarwa, rather than self-empowerment. This dependency, parading as "development," in turn yields endless state domination and control of the Basarwa. In this way, the state constructs a space of poverty.

Even though *The Creature*, offers an outside perspective of the affected Basarwa communities, it opens up a critique of the poverty relations that offer a state-critique of root causes of problems: the structural endemic and causal character of poverty. In contrast, other practitioners engage with the same issue only superficially (through discourses about "symptoms" such as alcoholism, AIDS and gender based violence).

The play implicates the state's central role in the causal relationship between poverty and economic development. Sanyal theorizes that poverty is integral to the existence of capital. This set up legitimatizes development by claiming to target the poor and dispossessed (those excluded from the capital's surplus), with the aim of ensuring

[93] In his book *Rethinking Capitalist Development*, Kalyan Sanyal defines "entitlement" as the set of alternative commodity bundles that a person can command in a society using the totality of rights and opportunities he or she faces: a person's access to legitimate commodities. On the other hand, "capability" is a relative term referring to what a person can do: can he adequately nourish himself? Live long? Read and write? Avoid preventable morbidity? (178)

[94] The RADP was adopted as a chief strategy for Basarwa development. It was essentially twofold: the state's acknowledgement of Basarwa as the poorest members of society and a commitment to settle them into Bantu sedentary settlements as a way of improving their socio-economic statuses to the level of the Tswana groups. Basically, it was a social engineering of the Basarwa at the convenience of the "development" provider – the state.

subsistence. This subsistence takes the form of poverty eradication programs, such as the Botswana RADP mentioned above. In this scenario, Sanyal argues, development becomes a reversal of accumulation, which shifts the focus from accumulation to absolute poverty. Because of the shift in focus, the discourse completely distances itself from the capital's agenda (174).

Applying Sanyal's theory in the context of Botswana means that the economic growth Botswana is so praised for and its poverty alleviation measures are the twin goals of development. The poverty of Basarwa, therefore, is structural and constructed; it is an outcome of the process of accumulation and its unequal distribution. Their labor exploitation is a function of accumulation by the Tswana agro-pastoralists. RADP was essentially created for the dispossessed Basarwa as a way of "developing" them. As the Creature suggests, provision of poverty reduction programs that shift focus from accumulation to poverty places the Botswana government in the role of the messiah, who cares for its poor citizens, by begging in the streets (raising government funds for poverty reduction programs) on their behalf. This allows the state to maintain the image of a nation of peace while ostracizing and oppressing an entire class of people. As observed by scholars such as Good, Nthomang, and Thapelo, the RADP has been unsuccessful.[95] The combination of relocation and poverty reduction programs, parading as part of the

[95] Using Kann et al (1990) evaluations of the RADP, Nthomang (2006) writes that even though the program's objectives are laudable, the implementation of the RADP did more damage than good. One of its many problems includes socio-economic marginalization of Basarwa resulting in their dependency on government welfare schemes. Nthomang pins the failures to two factors: firstly, the coercive, top-down paternalistic methods employed by government officials and their negative attitude towards Basarwa. Secondly, the incompatibilities of settlement life with the Basarwa values, lifestyle and culture (58-9).

Similarly, Good (1995) notes that the RADP's failures were those of political leadership (in particular lack of political commitment as well as forceful direction and leadership), the denial of productive sources, and of land and other rights to the San (197).

government's developmental agenda to improve the Basarwa quality of life, instead maintains and nurtures the state's power while sustaining the poverty of Basarwa.

It's important to acknowledge the Botswana government's efforts through policy reduction efforts such as the RADP and drought relief program. These efforts, which are also extended to the Basarwa, include the provision of free education and health care, old-age pensions, drought aid, free food for AIDS orphans, and free antiretroviral therapy for people with HIV/AIDS. However, rural poverty is still on the rise despite these efforts – which indicates that these developmental schemes deserve to be reconsidered. In the case of the Basarwa, the government needs to investigate why its notion of development to improve the quality of life of its poorest citizens does not yield the intended results. Based on the discussion above, I argue that the fundamental flaw in the development plan lies in the implementations of such programs: the failure to realize the unique position of Basarwa in the Setswana social structure and a failure to understand and accommodate the needs of their community. As this discussion has already established, with the Basarwa it is not a simple case of economic marginalization; there is also an element of social and cultural denigration. In this sense, the government's one-size-fits-all notion of development not only falls short of addresses the specific needs of this community but in fact the hegemonic perspective imposed on the Basarwa reinforces their ethnic and monetary marginalization.

The state's seeming desperation to ethnically homogenize its citizens into one national identity demonstrates a simplistic understanding of community that conceals the power relations (in this case between the dominant Tswana groups and the hunter-gatherer "creatures") within these communities and further masks how biases in interests

and needs are based on ethnicity and social class. By forcing the Basarwa to follow development outside of their ancestral land and change their livelihood, the government is denying them their cultural identity as a mobile community. Giving them free services is not going to solve their ethnic exclusion problems; it is like giving a hungry child a piece of clothing. Until the government acknowledges the unique position of Basarwa in its development strategies, the results will forever be superficial and harmful to those it is so keen to "develop."

Taking inspiration from Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari's (2001) theories, I label this notion of development a "tyranny of development," because of its failures to live up to its rhetoric of empowerment. As discussed, external definitions of development, particularly those that disregard the identities and wishes of its intended beneficiaries, create beneficiary dependency on the state. It is important to note that this dependency contradicts the state-supported goals of popular theatre in Botswana, which was initially implemented to help reducing communities' dependence on the state. Dependence on the state does not only yield easier control by the state, but is a mechanism of state social engineering to disenfranchise its already marginalized citizens. This evidence of asymmetrical power challenges the idea that Botswana is a successful liberal democratic state. To bring these ideas back to the main topic, consider: if the government's notion of development is based on a capital accumulation that entrenches minority communities in deeper dependency on the state, what does this mean for popular theatre practitioners who align themselves with the state?

Summary: "Ka e tlhoka, ka tlhoka boroko, ka e rua, ka tlhoka boroko" ("I lack it, I lose sleep; I own it, I lose sleep")

The funding situation is best described through the above Setswana saying. As established in previous chapters, cattle were tremendously important not just to the material economy but also to the symbolic economies of status, family, and social relations in Botswana. Cattle remain a powerfully evocative symbol to most Batswana today. As a gendered possession, cattle defined a man's wealth and worth. Even today, the cattle operate as both a cultural good and a commodity.[96] Therefore, cattle ownership was every man's dream, and its lack was a source of worry. However, the saying points out that the worrying continues even upon possessing cattle – for once one possesses a thing, one must then strive to keep it. Because of the ecological conditions in the country, which include persistent drought, poor grazing conditions, and frequent outbreaks of disease, cattle ownership is never guaranteed.

In the same way, while popular theatre and its operators would suffer from lack of funding, the acquisition of state funding brings its own problems of potential loss. The effort of trying to keep the funding results in the silencing of artists and communities, in sharp contrast to the stated goal of public theatre, which is to give the community a voice. My contention is corroborated, among other things, by Rabotsima's lament in the epigraph.

[96] This statement is substantiated by Thapelo J Otlogetswe who, in writing about the influence of the environment on language, notes, "*Kgomo ke yone pinagare ya itsholelo ya malwapa ka bontsi. Batswana ka tlholego ke barua-kgomo. Kgomo ke yone khumo ya Motswana; e santse e le sesupo sa itsholelo, e bile monna yo kgomo tsa gagwe di thibang marang a letsatsi o tlotlega setshabeng*" ("A cow holds and defines the economic power of many households. Naturally, Batswana are cattle keepers. A cow defines a Motswana's riches; it is still a material economy. Additionally, a man with a large herd of cattle is highly respected in his society" (). Thus, the significance of cattle in Batswana extends to and is captured by the Setswana language. Otlogetswe also alludes to cattle ownership as a gendered sphere.

Different theatre practitioners approach this situation differently. Most, compelled by the health and social issues facing their communities and glad of the opportunity to receive funding in their effort to help the community, join the government in raising awareness about such issues. By joining hands with the state, they operate as an extension of the larger national program (Vision 2016). This partnership has different effects on different groups. Some, as seen in Moremogolo's alcoholism play, align themselves completely with the government's agenda and partake in national/official discourses that simplify the issues by blaming the victims. Others, as seen in YOHO's play *His Excellency*, engage in obsequious behavior in order to win state funding. These two performances exemplify domesticated theatre groups in which the state has used its financial power to buy the power and voice of the artist. I claim that, by partaking in official discourses that oftentimes undermine and silence ordinary community discourses, both the Botswana state and popular theatre practitioners violate the very element that defines their functions as bodies dedicated to consulting with the community. As a democratic state, Botswana prides itself in its practice of consultation as the basis for its political and economic stability. This implies that communities are involved in the public policies that affect them. Similarly, one fundamental principle of popular theatre is community participation, which also implies consultation in that communities are involved in the formation of the play to ensure ownership of represented issues. However, the Botswana state's actual commitment to the principle of consultation is questionable, as shown by the Basarwa relocation program. Subsequently, it has exposed the falseness of its liberal democratic attainments that have earned it the image of peace. In the same way, when YOHO and Moremogolo engage in performances of obsequious

behavior and dissemination of moralistic messages that echo the state discourses that blame communities for various social issues, the theatre practitioner violates the theoretical ideologies of community participation.

Insufficient as the state funding is, it comes with state control over the narrative of the theatre's performance, as evidenced by Rabotsima, Lesolobe, and Tsholo's accounts of direct censorship. Furthermore, theatre groups engage in self-censorship in order to either win funding or to appease the funder. The study further reveals that the level of domestication of the performance varies according to the nature of the theme at hand. As Rabotsima points out, many theatre practitioners find themselves caught between addressing oppressive structures and preserving their funding status. When political correctness occurs at the expense of communities' needs and aspirations and the liberating quality of popular theatre, what is the future of popular theatre in Botswana?

Despite this gloomy reality, I am consoled to observe that there are still theatre practitioners such as Mama Theatre who are more committed to their art than to their survival – who, despite financial constraints, define their role according to the responsibility of providing a voice for their communities. Such practitioners do not have the luxury of sitting back amidst economic, political, and socio-cultural oppression, particularly when the denial of human rights, as in the case of the Basarwa, leave certain communities in what Micere Mugo describes as a perpetual begging posture (208). The relocation is a demonstration of the heaviest form of state domination. I argue that such circumstances as the relocation shape the work of an artist and measure his commitment to his work. While some artists kowtow to the government in order to maintain their group and funding status, other practitioners such as YOHO and Mama Theatre employ

different tactics to negotiate and challenge the state's power – commitment to social change.

This commitment to social change is further observed in the *Re Teng* performance of ethnic marginalization discussed in chapter 2, where the director of Mama Theatre, Rabotsima, respectfully put the invited members of parliament on the spot by asking them to publicly commit to using their positions of power to make a change regarding ethnic stigmatization. In this way, he risked his individual economic advancement for the well-being of his community.

Even though government funding oftentimes domesticates popular theatre by shaping the work of some theatre practitioners, the lack of it can equally constrain even the most committed theatre practitioners. This assertion is evidenced in *The Creature*, as its creators could not fully involve the Basarwa in the formation of the play because of financial constraints. Hence funding – both its presence and absence – shapes popular theatre in Botswana in a multitude of ways.

CONCLUSION

The Return: Retrospection for the Future

"Memory need not be a passive reflection, a nostalgic longing for things to be as they once were; it can function as a way of knowing and learning from the past" (hooks 40).

Before moving forward, I would like to return – first to retrace my quest that culminated with this dissertation: the search for women's roles as cultural producers and interveners in their communities. This quest was first sparked by a childhood memory of listening to *nkuku's* (grandmother's) stories night after night. The joy and spirit of community that this event afforded my siblings, my cousins, and I could not surpass the level of assertiveness and joy with which *nkuku* told every story. This wealth of knowledge that *nkuku* imparts to her audience through dialogue not only establishes storytelling as a democratic pedagogy as I argue in chapter two, it figures the genre as a space for women's authority in the domestic sphere. This authority calls for a comparison between the "domestication" of the popular theatre plays created in service to the state and the "domestication" of a home space created by women. Though in the eyes of the hegemony, this "domesticated" home largely contributes to the dismissal and figuring of women as weak and submissive just like *mmutle* in MmaKhotho's story, the home operates as a site of power for women storytellers – a place of democratic pedagogy that establishes audiences as co-producers in the communication process as I demonstrated earlier. In this medium, the storyteller imparts knowledge about social norms, history, and culture in a dialogue that encourages active audience participation and critically thinking as demonstrated by MmaKhotho.

As I left behind this foundational experience of learning in pursuit of formal education, I missed it more and more – I could not erase it from my mind. At the same time, the reality of the social status of Batswana women under a patriarchal tradition became more and clearer to me, which culminated in my search for women's voices in my new, scholarly environment. However, the search for Batswana women's voices in scholarly texts revealed biased and tainted accounts of women as passive victims that voicelessly succumb to their oppression. As *nkuku*'s memory continued to nudge me, I was struck by the discrepancy between my experience of women taking active positions in traditional performances such as storytelling and the passive depiction of women in literary texts, which did not account for their role as knowledge producers. Consequently my quest turned to popular theatre as a potential tool for communication and community mobilization, especially for the oppressed members of society. Interestingly the contrast in women's roles in storytelling and co-opted popular theatre still continues: strong independent voices versus marginal voices on the popular theatre stage.

As an example of how storytelling can educate, allow me to return to chapter one tell you a story about another storyteller.

Back in the lands, with MmaMogorosi, who is one of the many non-academic intellectuals of many rural areas, we are back from collecting firewood.[97] Moabi drives us to the compound of her two younger sisters, which is about five minutes away. The bond

[97] In her book *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins uses the label "non-academic intellectuals" to refer to illiterate women who possess a wealth of alternative knowledge or "subjugated knowledge" in various sites. She does this in a bid to correct the misconception that knowledge is only located in the academy.

between the three sisters is almost tangible. After we warmly are acquainted with one another, our discussions lead us to the changing cultural practices and roles of women in our society. MmaMogorosi mentions another predominantly female game that they used to enjoy as young girls growing up. The faces of her two younger sisters light up as they reminisce about this game, which was later given the name, "*seAmerika*" ("American") because it was so enjoyable. Surprised, I enquire more about who renamed it and why it was given this particular name. In an attempt to paint the picture, Moabi draws on our common identities as Batswana. She uses this simple and yet complex analogy: "*Akere o a itse gore ka Setswana fela fa selo se nkga monate kgotsa motho a le montle, re a re 'se nkga sekgoa' kgotsa 'ke lekgoa"*" ("You know how in Setswana when something smells good or someone is good-looking we say, 'It smells like white people' or 'She or he is a white person'? Shameful!" All three of us unanimously interject, "*Oo!*", which is a Setswana expression of remembrance or realization. To demonstrate my comprehension, I add "*A o bone ngwana waga semang-mang? Lekgoa!*" ("Have you seen So&So's child? A white person!") We all burst into laughter and MmaMogorosi, like a teacher, validates my knowledge with "*Ehee!*" ("Yes!"). In short, anything that is good in Botswana culture is associated with whiteness. Whiteness then becomes a metaphor of a dominant class, a better class. Viewing themselves through the eyes of the dominant class, Batswana renamed the game as a way of elevating it – a colonization of the mind.

Later on, after gathering enough children (about seven children ranging between two and twelve years of age) for a storytelling performance, MmaMogorosi sits the children in a semi-circle. She sits on a cream-white sack facing the children and puts the

sleepy youngest boy (her sister's grandson) on her lap. The she embarks on the story of "Tortoise and other Animals":

> It is said that a long time ago, there lived a tortoise and other animals of the forest. There was a great feast up in heaven and all the animals were invited. As they were getting ready for the feast, the animals decided to give themselves new names (Dolly, Bonnie, Tom, Thuso, etc.) for the feast. They started one by one until it was the tortoise's turn. After careful thinking, he finally declared, "I will name myself 'All-of-you.'" For a moment no one spoke as the animals exchanged looks of surprise at such a strange name.
>
> When they arrived at the celebration days later, the host brought them a big bowl of delicious food and announced, "This is for all of you." When the tortoise confidently extended his hands to receive the bowl with a smirk on his face, he thanked the host before turning to the animals. "Gentlemen and ladies, I'm sure you all have ears and have heard for yourselves that this is all mine."

At this point in the story, the children burst into laughter.

> As tortoise began to enjoy the food all by himself, the other animals watched in salivation, anger, and regret for giving themselves fancy but meaningless names. It was at this unpleasant moment that the animals finally began to understand the meaning behind the tortoise's name (Mmila 6).

At this point, MmaMogorosi pauses and looks at her curious audience before digressing. She carefully dusts the sack beside her with her right hand before placing upon it the now sleeping child. Taking advantage of her now prominent role as the master of suspense, she once again digresses by whisking flies away from the sleeping baby's face. Just as she lifts up her head, with a slight smile, a little boy asks, "What did the other animals do?" This becomes the doorway for a series of questions from the other children, "Did Tortoise eat all the food? Did the other animals stay friends with Tortoise?" Obviously enjoying this rupture of silence and explosion of curiosity, MmaMogorosi laughs and asks the boy who asked the first question, "What would you have done if you were one of the animals?" Without hesitating, the boy answers, "*Ke ne ke tla mo ngalela*" ("I would not talk to him"). One little girl adds, "I would change my name to All-of-you!" Laughing, MmaMogorosi brings the story to a close with, "*La bo le fela*" ("That's the end of the story"). The children giggle as they move away from the performance space.

MmaMogorosi and I do not follow up on the story; rather, we continue our casual discussions about how we imagine the future of this art in the midst of political and socio-cultural changes. Before we disperse, the three sisters joyfully try to teach me *SeAmerika*.

Away from MmaMogorosi's compound, I put on my researcher identity and begin to ponder the significance of the story. My childhood memory returns and I know that I have heard this story before, but I realize there were a number of significant differences in my experiences of the story, particularly in the title of the narrative and the ending. My initial convenient explanation for this variation is that perhaps MmaMogorosi has

forgotten the story. However, as I dig deeper in my quest to determine MmaMogorosi's thought process in choosing this narrative and this version, I put on my contextual and ethnographic lenses, allowing me to consider the entire context of the narrative: the performance (on-stage) and the pre- and post-performance (off-stage) conversations. In particular, these take me to the discussion about the re-naming of a traditional Setswana game to *SeAmerika.* The joint reading of the on- and off-stage performances, coupled with my knowledge of other versions, leads me to this interpretation: MmaMogorosi's chose the Tortoise story version discussed above because, while it still subtly encourages the spirit of communality over selfishness, her decision to omit the usual end of the narrative (where the other animals leave tortoise behind, he falls down because he cannot fly and ends with a shattered shell) is a critique of this external naming and colonization of the mind. Whether conscious or unconscious, this choice emphasizes the importance of naming, particularly of self-naming. This theme is not foreign to Setswana, as suggested by the saying, *"Leina lebe seromo"* ("A person's name determines his or her character"). Self-naming resonates with the concept of self-representation and is tied to the need for context and specificity, ideas that are central to Black and African feminist ideas, as proposed in chapter 3.

My joint reading of both the on and off-stage performance allows me to argue that MmaMogorosi did not make a haphazard choice; rather, it was a demonstration of the flexibility not only of the storyteller, but of the story itself as a context and audience based medium. In this way, the story serves both the children and myself as a researcher, as it further demonstrates the extent to which storytelling goes beyond entertainment – it is loaded with pockets of power and consciousness as embodied by the teller. This non-

academic intellectual MmaMogorosi engages in Scott's "politics of disguise"(19) by providing an on-stage public performance with multiple levels of meaning for its varied audiences. Her choice of story is a display of her awareness of the dangers of external definitions by those in power. Most importantly, with the character of Tortoise she offers a possible solution: the need for the subordinated to engage in self-defining.

As I delved further into research of popular theatre as a tool of communication for communities, I set out to examine how various theatre groups use this medium to increase community participation and thereby enhance the well-being of oppressed communities in post-colonial Botswana, which became the topic of this dissertation. As derived from Freire and Boal's theorizations about participatory communication, community participation is the identification of problems and themes by communities. Implied in this understanding is democratic communication, as demonstrated by Morake's interpretation of popular theatre in Botswana. Additionally, the dissertation sought to examine the role of women in popular theatre towards addressing issues of gender-inequality, HIV/AIDS and poverty that continue to relegate women into oppression.

Through working with theatre groups Moremogolo, YOHO, and Mama Theatre and observing various on-stage performances, supplemented with varied off-stage observations, I was able to demonstrate in this dissertation that certain popular theatre groups in certain contexts meaningfully involve their audience as communities, such as in the joker character who invites audience participation in YOHO's *The Flower*. Another example is Mama Theatre's *Re Teng* performance, whereby the facilitator/joker spontaneously took advantage of the attendance of government officials at the

performance to invite their public commitment to using their positions of power to change the situation of ethnic marginalization.

However, the dissertation argues that in state-funded projects, the stated goal of meaningful community participation as understood by practitioners of popular theatre is yet to be achieved. In these state-funded projects, control of content still lies with the state; these theatre groups cannot exist without funding, and with funding comes state decisions about performance themes and specific content – all in alignment with the objectives of the government's baby, the questionable Vision 2016 national program. To this end, the dissertation argues that, even from the first popular theatre project in Botswana, meaningful community participation and democratic communication has never been achieved as I demonstrate in Chapter Two. Rather, state participation in the popular theatre has caused a silencing of the artist and the community: state's co-option of popular theatre to push forward its agenda of national development, a development that does not always benefit communities.

The dissertation raises awareness of the stakes of aligning popular theatre (a supposedly counter-hegemonic art) to the state, which operates in different systemic functions. In the case of Botswana, as I argue in Chapter Four, the state's commitment to *therisanyo* (consultation – parallel to "community participation") is questionable, as shown by the state's debatable consultation with Basarwa during their relocation from Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). In these circumstances, can popular theatre in Botswana ever live up to its aims? Although the controversy reveals the state's lack of commitment to consultation and equality, it also provided an opportunity for certain popular theatre practitioners to align themselves with marginalized communities. Mama

Theatre emerged as an ally of the community in this instance, although those involved would attest that it was only able to do so because this particular performance was created independent of state funding. Thus, the dissertation finds that state funding provides somewhat paradoxical effects: it provides for the survival of popular theatre as it simultaneously domesticates it at the expense of communities. In this way, funding to a large extent shapes the popular theatre in Botswana.

I acknowledge that the dissertation does not fully capture the funding situation, as other theatre companies also rely on international and NGO funding, and NGOs just like the state have their own agendas (Rabotsima). The narrower scope was mainly guided by the Setswana saying, *"Maragana teng a bana ba mpa ga a tsenwe*" ("Do not get involved in sibling fights"). By focusing on state's funding only, the dissertation in this way serves as a first step toward assessing the efficacy of popular theatre in Botswana. What still needs to be explored is the influence of international funding (independently or in conjunction with the state's) on popular theatre practices as well as the future of this genre in Botswana.

Popular theatre in Botswana is still controlled by men, as demonstrated in Chapter Three. Consequently, on-stage performances to a large extent perpetuate dominant discourses of colonial patriarchal stereotypes and myths about women. The growing prevalence of gender-based violence observed in Vision 2016 ("Vision" pillar 5) clearly indicates that this state/theatre partnership is not achieving the desired result. Perhaps part of the problem lies with the location of women in this medium: despite the common on-stage perpetuations of stereotypes about women, the position of women in popular theatre is ambiguous. This ambiguity comes in the reference to women's silences, jokes,

sarcasms, lingering glances of the "off-stage" performances which as I have argued throughout the dissertation have subversive power. For this reason, the dissertation has proposed the joint reading of "on-stage" and "off-stage" performances to create meaning. I have demonstrated this reading in my analyses of popular theatre performances and MmaMogorosi's storytelling performance. For instance, in MmaMogorosi's case, she is able to dually use a particular story to entertain and animate her young audience while responding to our adult concerns/conversations of the pre-performance.

By drawing attention to what is already there but not tapped into, I am responding to scholars such as Zenenga (64) and Johansson, who call to engage culture specific theorizations and methods. Zenenga generates the call by primarily grounding his analyses of community theatre as a tool for non-formal education in Zimbabwe in African philosophies and theorizations. Writing about HIV theatre in Tanzania, Johansson aptly reminds us of the need for interventionists to recognize and use people's "culture-specific communication, local knowledge, and practices" (42). Most importantly, Mlama advocates the use of traditional mediums of communication (such as dance) that Tanzanian women are familiar with (63).

In addition to these calls, my lingering memory of *nkuku'*s assertive performances and the realization of the limited transformative roles of women on the popular theatre on-stage compelled my return to a reconsideration of storytelling as an alternative method where women can make transformations at the grass roots level, using mediums that they are most familiar with. As African feminist Ogundipe-Leslie cautions, "We must look for African women's voices in women's spaces" (9). With a medium that women are not only familiar with, but can control and reconstruct, MmaMogorosi and MmaKhotho

demonstrate that the art of storytelling – a pedagogy and subjugated knowledge - can be used to respond to women's heartfelt problems. Furthermore, by considering those who are low on the Botswana social hierarchy – rural women storytellers – I am both repositioning the women as active knowledge-creators and excavating their dying art.

By pointing to other sites where certain women's voices can be found, I am neither suggesting an abandonment of popular theatre nor its dismissal as a useless medium, since I have argued; the off-stage is a powerful site for the hidden transcripts of the subordinate. Rather I am responding to the very critique I have been making throughout about current state–serving popular theatre practices: the lack of democratic communication and dialogue with oppressed communities as intended beneficiaries of these projects. Therefore by exacting storytelling as an independent democratic pedagogy for rural women and their audiences, I am simultaneously increasing community participation and widening the scope of performance forms to accommodate the varied identities of women in Botswana.

My acknowledgement of Batswana women as heterogeneous is yet another response of the critique I have made about the tendencies of popular theatre practitioners to misread 'communities' as unified and stable. These simplistic understandings that overlook power relations inherent in differences of geographical space, gender, class, age and ethnicity are what in part limits meaningful dialogues with communities. As such I do not claim that storytelling can accommodate all women because of their multiple identities that in turn shape their choices. Therefore, as I demonstrated in Chapter Three in my analysis of YOHO's *The Flower*, a young urban girl Enigma's song, "How to Raise a Real Man" amounts to yet another powerful medium through which a woman is

in control of her narrative. In a compelling and assertive voice, Enigma uses her song to respond to a social problem that is a threat to all women (an issue that cuts across all boundaries) in Botswana: gender-based violence.

In this way the dissertation opens up opportunities for further explorations of the different sites where voices of the various marginalized communities can be found – towards preventing treating communities like Mama Theatre's caged Creature: using the one-performance-medium-fits-all approach that in the end further subjugates communities. This could require a local re-modification of popular theatre rooted in the context of Botswana: an attempt at a more symmetrical exchange between popular theatre and traditional performance forms.

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